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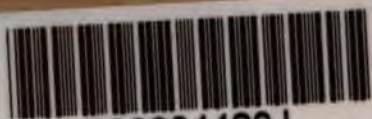
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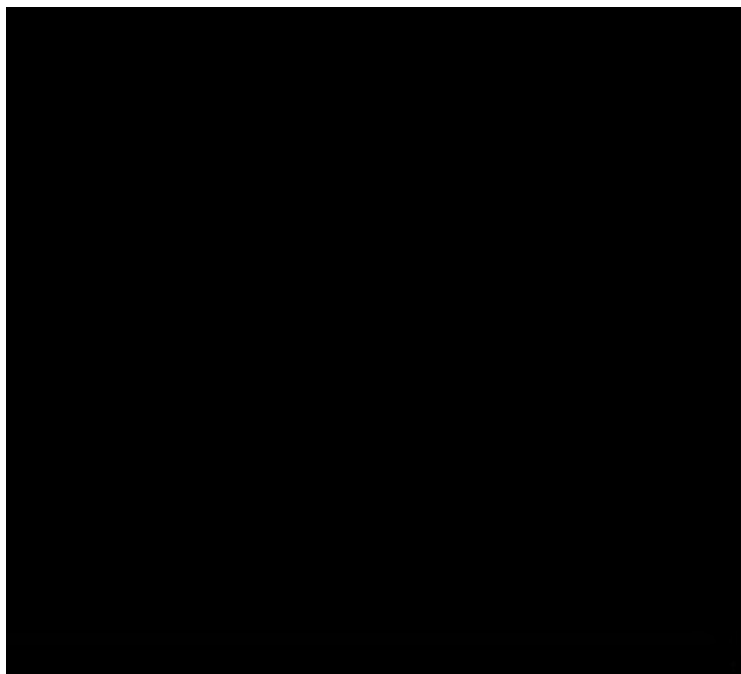


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WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS.

VOL. I.

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WIDOWS
AND
WIDOWERS.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

BY

MRS. THOMSON,

AUTHORESS OF "CONSTANCE," "ANNE BOLEYN," ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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P R E F A C E.

I HAVE called this a "Romance of real Life," for I cannot send it forth as entirely fiction. Every work of this kind must, more or less, be founded on experience and observation; in this, one of the main incidents is founded, as the Reader will soon perceive, on fact.

It is now half a century since the singular, and still mysterious event which I have described in the second volume, excited an extraordinary degree of interest. A deed of darkness, performed, not in the bustling scenes of life, but in the bosom of a domestic household, and accompanied with circumstances of treachery and ingratitude so flagrant, seemed scarcely credible to the good,—incomprehensible to the bad,—who could scarcely detect sufficient motive. For a long time, the guilt

of the unhappy man, whom I have called "Lawson," was doubted in the neighbourhood where he lived; and, I believe, to this day he is there regarded by the lower classes as a martyr to the vengeance of his mother-in-law.

The custom of the present day, which tends to draw away the screen from private life, the long period which has elapsed since the affair, and the fact that no lineal descendant of that unfortunate family remains, — that even those who now bear its name are collateral and remote branches, might well excuse me for here adverting in plain terms to a trial, and to that fatal and disgraceful result, which has almost become a matter of history; and which can in no way reflect on the time-honoured branch of that race, who have no connexion in blood with the family, and a very slight affinity to the innocent party. I have preferred veiling my fiction, for this simple reason, that I do not think I should myself like to see the name of my grandfather stuck up on a title-page; unless, indeed, he had figured, not in the annals of crime, but of glory. If I cannot

succeed in amusing and gratifying the community, I should be extremely sorry to have the power, however insignificant, of hurting the feelings of a fellow-creature. Very few persons, out of the county where the event took place, seem to remember the trial of "Lawson;" it is quoted sometimes by lecturers on medical jurisprudence: my attention was called to it from a different reason to that with which the legal or medical student would regard the detail of this occurrence.

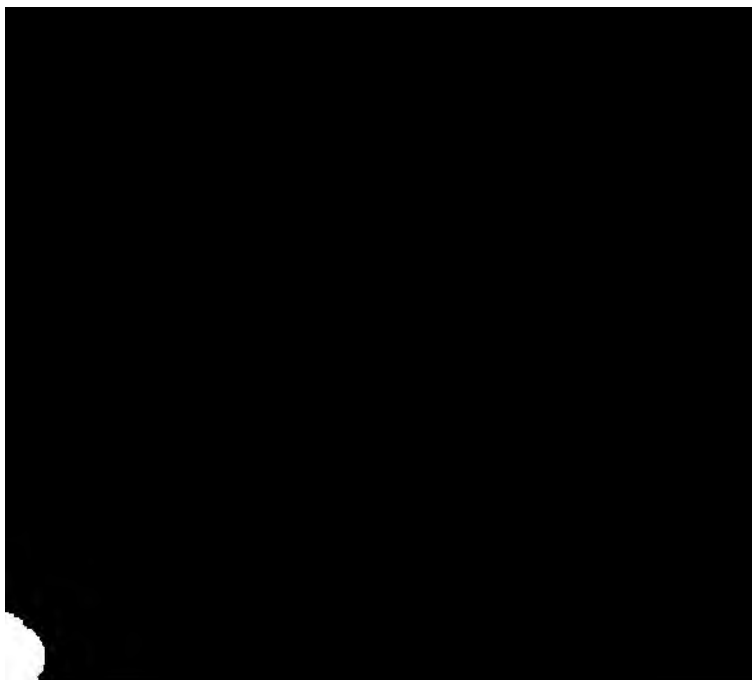
It was, I believe, the first detected instance of poisoning by prussic acid, or rather by laurel-water, which is the basis of prussic, in this country. Very probably some of those unexplained events in "our history," those sudden and mysterious deaths in the days of the Tudors and Stuarts, may have been produced by this deleterious agent. The first account I ever heard of this case of poisoning was given me, many years ago, by a very old lady, who had heard the trial, much against the wishes of her husband, who acted as under-sheriff. Her description was extremely gra-

phic: she firmly believed in the innocence of "Lawson," who was a very handsome man, made a capital bow, and had the sweetest smile imaginable. But I remember being particularly struck by the *manner* of his victim's death; it was accompanied with those fearful circumstances, the gurgling sound in the throat, the mouth frothed by the convulsive effort to reject the poison, the heaving of the chest, and other particulars, which you may be sure lost nothing in the old lady's narrative. I thought they must be exaggerated, until I afterwards read the trial.

I had, however, forgotten most of these details, or I regarded them with diminished interest until the mysterious death of L. E. L., which has been attributed to the same potent and deadly cause,—to that agent which is often so carelessly sold in our shops, prussic acid,—revived the recollection of my good old friend, the under-sheriff's wife, and her minute account; and my attention was drawn, with an interest so mournful that I dare not trust myself to expatiate upon it, to this case,

which had some parallel circumstances. In both instances the body was not examined; until in the one case, that on which my fiction expatiates, "decay's effacing fingers" had been many days at work. In both instances there was, from the nature of the poison, a doubt, a difficulty, a hesitation, consequently, in honest minds, to form a decision, which induces this conviction, that the mystery will probably never be fully disclosed, save at the last great account.

I cannot but hope that my story will be received with some interest, from its subject.



WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS.

CHAPTER I.

“ I saw two beings in the hues of youth.”

BYRON'S *Dream*.

IN a well-furnished apartment in London lay a young man, enfeebled by illness, on a sofa. The room, though invested with every attribute of comfort, was in disorder : a book here, a shawl there, a flute in this chair, a cloak or a dog on that, shewed that the tenants of the chamber were of mingled occupations, and of different sexes.

A French novel was in the youth's hand ; but his restless eye wandered from it to the door, or to the repeater, which was on the table near him, or to the window. The postman's knock, anticipated as it was by the invalid, caused him to start ; and a deep flush covered

his face the instant afterwards. Panting, yet still reclining, for he was scarcely released from the strong grasp of fever, the young man turned his eyes eagerly to the door. No one entered; but the string of the bell handle being placed within reach of the sick man's hand, he now applied himself to it with a degree of agitation which shook his weak frame.

In a few minutes a female entered. She was one of those women whose influence over men is so incomprehensible, yet who retain that influence even when disgust has succeeded infatuation. She was one of those whose lapse from virtue was the least of their sins; rapacious, hardened, vindictive, remorseless, living without fear or hope; a harpy, whose fangs entrapped all that a mother might still prize in her son, whose discourse, day by day, beat down the feeble barriers of decency, and trampled every better resolution under foot. But I forbear,—let me hurry over this needful portion of my history.

Dirty and smart, with ringlets that almost swept the rouge from her cheeks, fair hands sullied by neglect, but bedecked with rings, slipshod feet, and a gown trailing and tawdry,

the boddice of which was in many places disjoined from the skirt; a spaniel under one arm, and a flask of liqueur in the other; this person, who shall be nameless, fixed her eyes with that indescribable stare which must be left to imagination, upon the invalid.

“Well!” was the anxious exclamation of the young man.

“Well!” replied the woman, throwing her spaniel to the ground, and with it fell from the pocket of her apron a letter.

The eyes of the young man glistened with delight.

“I expected it,” he exclaimed, extending his hand; “come, Margaret, no folly, come.”

The woman stamped in fury; tore the letter into bits, and threw the bits into the fire. A silence ensued. It was broken by the young man springing from his couch; and, with the impulse of a maniac, grasping and shaking the frame of the wretched woman who had offended him. The effort exhausted him; he sank to the floor, and was raised, with taunts and muttered imprecations, by his attendant fiend, again to the sofa.

“I know, I know,” said the woman in

mockery of his groans, "from whom this letter comes; you had best answer it. There, take this," filling out a glass of liqueur, "and go to sleep. You have pinched my arm, though."

"Sleep! sleep!" murmured the young man. "But I will write to her to-morrow; I can, then—" he turned from the woman with an expression of scorn and disgust ineffable—perhaps, the contrast of a being lovely, fresh, pure, loving, yet coyly; trusting in him who thus bestowed his hours and means, and reputation, on the most depraved of Sin's victims, rose to his memory; perhaps that image soothed him, for, after a time, he fell asleep.

Even on the day when this scene was enacted, a very different conversation was carried on between two individuals remote from London; but the circumstances had reference to the persons above-described.

If a traveller, emancipating himself slowly from the endless suburbs, and smoke, and din of dirty Wolstanstone (corrupted into Wolstone), a manufacturing town not in the South of England, proceed westward, he enters into a region of peace and rural beauty, refreshing as the vision of Beatrice was to Dante, the glimpse

of earth to Satan, the thoughts of home to them who know that their lot is to perish in the wave. The village of Northington, which the wayfaring man from Wolstone may be thought thus to hail, reflects, nevertheless, the wealth of its great and smoky neighbour. Several spacious houses, — the apothecary, the attorney, and the maltster's, — shew that business thrives there; deriving a stimulus, doubtless, from the regions of disease, wealth, and intemperance with which Wolstone abounds, for the village aristocracy of Northington were all connected with the woes of mankind. The doctor has his large brass plate upon his garden-gate, with "night-bell," and "surgery-bell," in running cadence above; his one-horse chaise is ever and anon at the door, ever setting out, ever coming home; the maltster announces his trade in honest ostentation; gilt letters on a black board declare his ancient, though not honourable vocation; the solicitor, more refined, has merely the words "Mr. Meadows" inscribed in very fine copper-plate on his inner door. These are the principal features of what may be called the High Street of Northington. "Mr. Blake, veterinary surgeon," fills

up the space between a shop-window comprising every fabric of human industry from Epsom salts to pattens, and a wicket-gate, which leads through a covered walk to the church.

It was a huge, grey, unsightly, yet imposing structure, that old church at Northington; with a banging set of chimes, which, before nerves were invented, were all very well; a peal of bells which were never all rung, save when the family of a neighbouring Baronet, the denizens of a red brick tenement, beyond yonder avenue of limes, came to their natal parish. This, the manor-house, was built of that old red brick which some, in this degenerate age, have wilfully and wickedly covered with Roman cement, forgetting how Time hath honoured red brick houses; how harmoniously red brick mingles with the green of a landscape; what respectability red bricks confer upon many who want it; for it denotes at least age, if not antiquity; and there are many in this honoured land who have no other merit, nor grace, than the long fibres of the root which their ancestors planted. Tufton Court, which I shall hereafter describe, retained, however, its ancient colour.

—Let us stop at Mr. Meadows' door ; that green gate close to the foot-path, opening into a well-kept gravelled road, shady, and winding, leads to the respectable, roomy, and also red brick house. Attorneys are seldom men of taste ; the habitation of the Meadows family had been, and was, faced with stone, with long, high, many-paned windows, a wide and elevated front door, with a horse-block near, and a handsome flight of stone steps running up to it. Mr. Meadows, when he grew rich, had lowered the steps, removed the horse-block, taken great pains to plant and nourish a holly-bush before an old-fashioned sun-dial on the lawn, and considered the house to be much embellished. It was said to be so by Mr. Gadsden, his clerical neighbour, a bachelor, with whom the whole maiden population of the parish was in love, and by the owner of the manor-house, Sir Tufton Tyrawley, who was innately pleased that any faint resemblance between the attorney's house, offices included, and his own manor-house, should be obliterated. There was abundant precedent for the alterations ; and, on the whole, to his dying

hour, Mr. Meadows had the happiness of being unconscious how completely he had spoiled a house which he adored.

Digesting the portico as one might, the instant entrance into a cool and spacious hall, flagged with grey and white marble, and having in its centre a large white marble vase, filled with sweet-scented flowers in summer, in the winter with sprigs of evergreen, disarmed the critic. To the right, alas! was a glass door with green blind, on which the word "Office" was painted in strong characters: on the left, the library of Mr. Meadows himself, into which no profane visitant ever entered on legal business: the "office" was for such; and Mr. Meadows was not a man to brook intrusion.

It was in the afternoon of that day upon which the incident before-mentioned took place, that Mr. Meadows sat in his library with a grave and even anxious face. His daughter Adeline, kneeling before him, with her arms resting on his knees, looked up into his face. She was a girl of seventeen, or perhaps eighteen, in whose large and dark and speaking eyes, the sufferings of a sensitive

mind might be traced. Her complexion was clear and delicate, but a bright spot burned on either cheek. Her features were flexible and regular rather than elevated; her form, though tall, was slender and girlish. Yet Adeline was deemed the belle of Northington; nay, even at the Wolstone balls, her gentle manners, grace, and the bright glance of genius which often lighted up her face, gained her the name of the Northington beauty. But then she was a solicitor's daughter; and, as such, entitled, amid a region of iron-masters, brass-founders, pin-makers, and their progeny, to that magic possession—*caste*.

Such is the insufficiency of all worldly advantages, that, although thus considered, and allowed precedence in the country-dance, and generally engaged “ten deep;” although blessed with a fond father, wealth in expectation, and a brother who regarded her with pride, Adeline was not happy; her young form was already attenuated by some pressing anxiety; her voice was hoarse and broken; her dark eyes tearful, as she sought to read her father's countenance.

“But—but, my dear father, it may not, it

cannot be true. We shall hear from him. I have challenged him," she added, raising her head, and speaking with much spirit, "with the fact: I have told him what has been alleged—that he associates with gamblers; and that Loftus knows it."

"You should not mention your brother's name; never commit another," said the solicitor with gravity. "But it is the old story—father, brother, friends, all—all to be sacrificed for a suitor; and the greater the reprobate the stronger the passion."

Adeline's heart throbbed with momentary wrath. It *was* the old story:—A young fancy ensnared by gay spirits and well-bred manners; a cautious father displeased; a proud and priggish brother warmed by slights into interference: a brief season of enjoyment followed by months—nay, years of sadness.

"Young Floyer," pursued Mr. Meadows in a firm tone, "is an extravagant, thoughtless, dissolute young man, who has mortgaged his estate:"—Mr. Meadows raised his voice: he was a father, and he was, also, a solicitor; and the concern of the one for the welfare of an only daughter, was heightened by the cir-

cumstance that Mr. Floyer had given the management of the last-mentioned transaction into the office of another professional man—a friend of Mr. Meadows, for Mr. Meadows was too just and good a man to have a rival; yet still there was mortification inflicted.—“He has mortgaged his estates,” repeated Mr. Meadows with a heavy sigh, half fatherly and half professional: “Woodcote and Merridale are worthless, or next to worthless; then those farms”—

“But you said,” replied the drooping Adeline, “that he was also—oh! I cannot repeat the word! Is extravagance *all* the fault you find in Mr. Floyer?”

Mr. Meadows turned away his head. There were, as the reader may surmise, other faults attached to Mr. Floyer. A mother, in such a case, would have been explicit; men have more circumspection, and more delicacy than women. Mr. Meadows, after a few moments delay, replied,—

“How can I tell?”

The evasive answer brought comfort to the young and trusting heart of his daughter. She rose from her knees; a heavy load was

taken from her heart, and Adeline burst into tears.

Mr. Meadows read the heart of his daughter, and was silent. It was enough, he thought, to forbid all correspondence between the parties; too much to add misery to disappointed affections. But, in proportion as he could not but blame himself for concealing from Adeline the character of her lover, his resolution to separate them grew stronger: his manner became more decided.

“It is enough:—a man of careless and extravagant habits — of ruined fortunes, a daughter of mine shall never marry. Adeline, I forbid all writing — all intercourse; whilst I live I will never consent to a renewal of *that* acquaintance. After my death, if you choose to throw yourself away” —

“Oh, my father! my dear father!” cried Adeline, throwing herself into his arms, “do not be cruel: — after your death! — oh, ten times sooner would I displease you now, than violate your wishes *then*. But it is very hard, my dear father, it is very, *very* hard to — to think that I shall never again see him; to think that he is now free — to forget me!”

"It is hard," replied Mr. Meadows in a tremulous voice; "that is, it is altogether an unlucky business. How you could ever, Adeline, think for an instant of a man who, as you knew, when he first came back into the country, was living upon his capital; whose farms were not let,—into whose house an execution was put not six months ago;—every inch of whose ground was mortgaged;—whose very grandfather left the plate and furniture away from him, knowing that if he did not, it would all soon come to the auctioneer's hammer; who, nevertheless, must needs have racers—set up a coach and four—buy pictures—build a music-room, hire concert-singers, and invite such devils as those to his house!"

"I never thought," continued Mr. Meadows, finding that Adeline had nothing to urge against this "true bill," "that a girl of your taste and understanding, and so mightily particular about everyone else, could fancy such a spendthrift, and, excuse me, Adeline, so simple a spendthrift. For who," pursued the solicitor, "so likely to manage his affairs well as our office, in which his respected grandfather, General Floyer, reposed full con-

fidence? The deeds and rent-roll of the Woodcote estate were in our iron chest upwards of twenty years; and General Floyer's name you must have seen on our tin boxes as long as you can remember. *I* have no objection to Mr. Thomason of the Market Place, but *I* own it has given me a poor opinion of Mr. Stanhope Floyer's good sense and gratitude that he should send for those deeds, and transfer them into other hands."

Mr. Meadows had done. He turned from his daughter calmly, and began to tie up some papers with the orthodox red tape, and Adeline withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

“ Life is a flower, the sages say,
That blooms to-day and fades to-morrow,
If such our state, ye wise ones, pray
Have we an hour to waste in sorrow ?”

Old Song.

It was the mortgages, the executions, the difficulties, the mortifications by which Mr. Stanhope Floyer had been assailed, which had interested the generous feelings of Adeline, and not the coach and four, the pictures, and the racers, that had beguiled her young fancy :—for Adeline was romantic. True it was, that though Byron had not in her days even begun to breathe, she had imbibed from some source that spirit of passionate constancy which breaks forth in the lines to Thyrsa. Hayley and Lord Lyttelton, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Mrs. Greville,—these were the chief poets recommended by fashion in Adeline’s youth ;

and these could do no one any harm : how the young girl had acquired that fruitful fancy which invests all things with a bright glow, a mingling of the heart and the imagination, it were difficult for those who knew the society of Northington to discover.

On the day after the conversation with her father, Adeline, availing herself of his absence at the Wolstone sessions, undertook a long walk. A yearning, indulged not checked, to hear something of him from whom she was now, by paternal mandate, dissevered, grew upon her ; and she vainly fancied that she should become more tranquil, could she but view some actual trace of him from whom she could not deem herself for ever separated. One of his sporting dogs even, or his horse, or a stile over which he had habitually climbed, or—but who can rehearse the endless catalogue of trifles over which a lover's heart broods?

Adeline took the road which turned aside from the end of the village towards Woodcote. She revolved in her mind, as she moved noiselessly down a sandy lane, along which she almost fancied she could trace the tracks of her poney when she had last ridden there with

Mr. Floyer, the few last years of her short existence. After seventeen the true colours of life appear, she thought, to burst upon us, as from behind a cloud. Before, all is vague, passionless, easy, void of regret, without hope. We are too much pleased with the present to value hope, to which we cling so much in after-life. Now, the waters of the current had been disturbed; and how were they to settle again? She asked herself that question, and looked towards Woodcote with a sigh.

She recalled her first meeting with Mr. Floyer, and all the change which that introduction had wrought in her ideas of happiness, in her views of society. A solicitor in a country-village is placed between two grades of society. The aristocracy employ and visit him and his family according to their own convenience. The trading inhabitants of towns are proud of the notice of a professional man. Mr. Meadows was highly respectable; circumstances had thrown him among Wolstone manufacturers, but an intimate acquaintance with most of the rent-rolls and pedigrees of his higher neighbours, had given him a wonderful respect for the landed

proprietors. His interest led him both ways; and Adeline, after her return from a Bath boarding-school, had mingled, with certain reservations, among the ill-favoured but stirring inhabitants of the manufacturing town, which contained a large proportion of wealth and ugliness.

It was true that her brother Loftus, who was a prig of the first eminence, had only escorted her to those public assemblies at Wolstone over which the ladies of bankers or merchants presided as stewardesses, and the physician, or town-clerk (being a solicitor) as steward; though there were others, at which Mr. Robertson, the proprietor of a large hardware emporium (visited by all foreigners, and once by old George III. himself,) presided; but to such Adeline, though assured by her young friends that such balls were far more social, and displayed really better dancing than the exclusive ones, did *not* go; and when even at the higher ones, should any improper person be admitted, Loftus had always danced with her himself, and thus kept off the chance of any contamination. Adeline now wondered that she had ever enjoyed these recreations,

that she *could* have danced with those who were then, even by Loftus, thought worthy of her. She dated her inoculation into fresh ideas, the change of all her views, to one momentous evening, now a year since, and she ran the circumstances over briefly in her imagination.

At one extremity of Northington there stood a small white house, called, from its situation, the Hill House, which was tenanted by Lady Theodora, or, as she was commonly called, Lady *The* Floyer, who had married Mr. Stanhope Floyer's uncle. Lady *The*'s son was a minor, and she had so contrived her affairs as to quarrel with his guardians, and therefore so as *not* to have the care of him during his minority. She lived therefore alone, awaiting, with much impatience, the day when her son should reach his twenty-first year.

Mr. Meadows had been of professional service to Lady *The*; and as his assistance was gratuitous, she was very civil; and she paid him, as the great are wont to do, by being godmother to his daughter. This was seventeen years ago, and ever since that time a friendship, sure to last, had been maintained;

for Lady Theodora was litigious, and Mr. Meadows still did her law-business, remunerated, certainly, with the honour of having Lady Theodora for hours in his library, for she gave as much trouble as if she paid for it, and now and then, by a doe haunch of venison, some half-ripe peaches from her garden, some char, which had travelled two days, and many other delicacies.

It was under the roof of Lady Theodora that Adeline had met Stanhope Floyer; and she now, as she wended her way, remembered how a sudden mist had fallen from her eyes,—how forced and coarse all the conversation of the Northington gentlemen had seemed to her, how easy and gay *his*; how stiff and embarrassed even Loftus had appeared near to one who had moved and moved only in the best society; how wearisome every party had since proved; how intolerable every compliment, how welcome every slight, from those whose compliments had once made her heart beat, and of whose slights she could not formerly bear to think.

Whilst thus she ruminated, Woodcote came into view; and whilst her eyes rested tearfully

on its closed windows, she was unconscious that a figure gently approached, and leaned over the low stile with her. A little shuffle, which shook the wild briar spray near her, made Adeline turn round.

“ Mr. Gadsden !” was her unsentimental exclamation.

“ Yes, Miss Meadows, it is Mr. Gadsden,” replied, with a mechanical smile, a gentleman of that coy age when men become extremely timid on the subject of female advances. Mr. Gadsden was the curate of Northington, where he had settled upon the assurance of there being few ladies there. For he had positively been driven out of the last parish by the invincible nature of his own charms. All the ladies *would* fall in love with him. If he merely dealt to them at cards, he was sure to make inroads upon virgin or widowed hearts. His visits to the poor were certain never to be solitary, but had the look of appointments; his very parochial duties were dangerous to the peace of those whom he came to save; and whilst he spiritually advised an invalid, or read by the bed-side of her dying father, he was doomed to be told confidentially by a sister or

brother that his consolations were daggers to the peace of some female members of the family.

Mr. Gadsden was a small, light man, with smooth hair neatly cut, a calm blue eye, a placid mouth, and no whiskers. He was now thirty-five years old; and men, when they arrive at that age, and are unmarried, are as prudish about being joked as old maids. Perhaps he did not mean to marry — perhaps he did: he might not yet have made up his mind; his hour was not yet come. Be that as it may, he felt extremely offended with the ladies who now fell in love with him, worked kettle-holders, and painted hand-screens to seduce him, and the reports and jokes with which a fat, vulgar vicar had daily plagued him, drove him finally to a village where, he was told, he might look round from the pulpit without distraction, where all the ladies were married, and none of the married widows.

Such was the gentleman who now addressed Adeline with

“This is your favourite walk, I think, Miss Meadows?”—“And yours, too, Mr. Gadsden?”

“Miss Meadows!” exclaimed the Curate,

buckling his armour of prudery, and looking straight-forward:—"I do not understand how, why?"

"And there is no time for explanations," interrupted Adeline, skipping over the stile, and pursuing her way by a hazel hedge along a path, across which the ripe wheat straggled, until her figure was almost lost amid the tall ears which touched her bonnet.

Mr. Gadsden, glancing to the right and to the left, and then behind him, made a plunge, and prepared courageously to follow. Had Adeline looked behind, and appeared anxious for his company, she would have been safe from the worry of the little man's company, but she paced on without a moment's delay; and Mr. Gadsden, settling his cravat and brushing his hat round with his silk handkerchief, settled in his mind the question that she could *not* think he had any intentions if he did follow her.

"I only—I only mean to come with you, just along that field, Miss Meadows, where I see some cows, and probably a bull—you're afraid of cows?—most ladies are!"

Adeline (happy girl) had no fear of cows;

and as to the bull, she said, as graciously as she could ;—“ I have passed him so often that I think he knows me.”

“ Very possibly, Miss Meadows,” replied Mr. Gadsden, who, petted as he was by the fair sex, was no hero ; and, as they passed along a path which led across the field, he remarked, “ that he never liked bulls.”

“ Oh, no fear !” returned Adeline ; “ but if so, you had better turn back, Mr. Gadsden—pray do, your life is valuable, you know, to the parish.”

“ How very kind !” thought Mr. Gadsden ; “ perhaps I had best turn back, it may look awkward.—But, good Heavens ! Miss Meadows,—look ! look !—run ! run !—the bull is coming near us !” and at this moment the terrific animal bounded, bellowing, forward.

“ The worst plan in the world,” shouted a loud voice from across the hedge which surrounded the field ;—“ The animal is fierce, but do not run.”

“ I have heard,” cried Mr. Gadsden, in a voice choked with fear, “ that it is a good thing to lie down—and seem dead—will you do so—Miss Meadows ?” He gasped out the last

words, and ere Adeline had time to reply, he fell flat upon the ground, with his face turned towards it. Adeline had a strong, resolute mind. Though sensitive, she was courageous. Pale as a spectre, she yet kept a quick, not running, pace, looking stedfastly at the mighty animal, who came heavily, but bellowing, towards her. Back upon the Curate she dared not look.

“Keep on,” cried the voice beyond the hedge—“this way—this way—now—now you are safe.”

The last words were uttered in a softer tone. Adeline had now gained the stile at the opposite end of the field. Calm and mute, though almost breathless, she climbed the lower rails; then, for the first time, looked back. The bull was busy with Mr. Gadsden; and Adeline, scarcely sensible of what she did, was received safely into the arms of some person who now came forward from the opposite side of the hedge.

A deep silence of several moments ensued. The bellowing of the bull had ceased, and the tender notes of the birds were the first sounds of which Adeline became conscious.

She started, and released herself from the firm support of a gentleman who had sustained her. He, bowing with the air of a man who had done his duty (although he had not crossed the stile), took up his eye-glass and looked coolly at Mr. Gadsden, still prostrate. The bull, who had carefully examined Mr. Gadsden with his nose, and who had struck him some far from pleasing blows with his fore-feet, was now retiring from the investigation as fruitless.

“’Pon my word!” exclaimed the unknown gentleman; “vastly good! he takes it coolly! —But, my good fellow,” said he, raising his voice, “hadn’t you better get up now? Our fat friend may take it into his head to return.”

“Am I—am I safe?—Is he gone?” said Mr. Gadsden in a suffocated tone: and looking around him, he speedily took to his heels and joined the other two.

“Good gracious, Miss Meadows! Am I really alive? Are *you* alive? Here’s my hat all smashed! And—good gracious! my coat torn behind! it’s very, very wrong in people to leave such animals loose, and they ought

to be fined, imprisoned! Oh, me! excuse my mentioning them; but do look at my trousers."

"Well, sir, you're safe," said the strange gentleman, condescendingly. "If you *will* escort young ladies across dangerous fields——"

"Me!—me, sir!" replied Mr. Gadsden, colouring—"but the question is, how are we to return?"

"I,"—here Adeline interposed—"I am quite myself again; I have a message at the Grange—(her lips trembled as she said—at Woodcote)—and I will get one of the men at the house to see me home. You must go round by that field, Mr. Gadsden, across the copse, then there's a brook, and you will know your way—good afternoon."

"Not so," said the strange gentleman, courteously, though loftily; "if this gentleman, (to whose cloth I will have greater respect than the bull had,)" raising his hat a little,—"must go home,—Mr. Gadsden, the curate of my parish, I believe;—don't be distressed. Mr. Gadsden, your hat is only converted into a shovel;—if Mr. Gadsden chooses to leave you, madam, I cannot—you will find no one at the

hall: my friend Floyer is away, but at all events I will escort you there if you wish to go."

The words, "my friend Floyer," had a charm for Adeline; and, for the first time, she looked attentively on the person of the speaker.

He seemed to be at least forty years of age, and the carefully curled locks of hair which peeped forth from under his hat, were tinged with grey. It was before the days of powder had for ever passed away, and a very slight dash was perceptible upon the locks of the stranger. His figure was middle-sized, firm, erect: not exactly elegant, not awkward. His features were regular and neat: a searching hazel eye sparkled beneath eyebrows arched and penciled. Something of sternness in his first address, and of arrogance in his air, vanished when the stranger spoke. His voice was clear and modulated by the habits of the refined—(and in what are those habits more easily detected than in the tone of voice?)—and there was considerable sweetness about his mouth: his teeth were well placed, and the smile which displayed them was never forced, or sudden, but gradual and involuntary.

Adeline was beginning to wonder who he was, when the stranger raising his hat from his head, after the fashion of those days, said with nonchalance,

“My name is Tyrawley—it is better to introduce ourselves;—and I fancy, from what I heard from my respected friend, Mr. Gadsden, in his agonies, that I’ve the honour of addressing Miss Meadows.”

Adeline bowed assent, and Mr. Gadsden holding his hat in his hand, said with much formal respect,

“Sir Tufton, I feel much honoured by, by an acquaintance—”

“To which *Monsieur le Taureau* hath introduced us.—But, my good sir, I *was* at church on Sunday, although the crimson curtains of my pew did not allow me the power of seeing and being seen—of looking around on all the Northington belles, as *you* do from your elevated perch, Mr. Gadsden.”

“I, Sir Tufton,” exclaimed Mr. Gadsden, quite alarmed; “I really am a stranger here, and know no one.”

“Not even Miss Meadows,” returned Sir Tufton, bowing to Adeline. And then, scarcely

noticing Mr. Gadsden, he walked on, conversing with Adeline upon the risk which she had just encountered; relating anecdotes of similar adventures, and talking away with the ease of a man who knows himself to be in society inferior to his own grade.

The party now drew near to a path which leads through a copse-wood to Woodcote, and here Adeline made another attempt to free herself from her companions, and to return home quietly. But Sir Tufton insisted upon accompanying her—that is to say, he turned back with her, and walked perseveringly by her side, avoiding the field of danger, until they arrived opposite to Mr. Meadows' green gates. Then he bowed low; looked with a half smile at the retreating figure of Mr. Gadsden, who vanished as if he were much ashamed of himself, and replacing his hat very much on one side of his head, after the Bath fashion approved some twenty or thirty years ago, he disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

"This life is all chequer'd with pleasures and woes,
That chase one another, like waves of the deep."

MOORE.

ADELINE found that a friend had arrived—Miss Williams,—a lady whose massive auburn curls floated in the wind as she flew out of the hall door to kiss and re-kiss, embrace and re-embrace her darling Adeline.

Miss Williams had been a teacher in a school near Northington, and her many hard duties, scanty salary, and lively manners, had attracted the good offices of Mr. Meadows, who had been wont during the lifetime of Mrs. Meadows to invite Miss Williams to dinner on a Sunday, taking her home himself, and listening with the gravity of a discreet, and with the attention of a kind, man, to the many complaints, embellished by a lively fancy, which Louisa Williams after church-time poured

forth to him and Mrs. Meadows, touching the narrowness and pride of Miss Towers of Northington High House. Miss Williams was clever and good-hearted; and Mr. and Mrs. Meadows, her very opposites in manner, became so greatly interested in her, that when, upon Miss Towers' growing jealous of her influence with the young ladies, and discharging her unhandsomely, a party prevailed in the village for and against Miss Williams, for and against Miss Towers, they took the weaker side, invited Miss Williams to their house, where she gratified them by declaring she was so happy she could never go away, and finally upon Mrs. Meadows being obliged to go to the South for her health, it being not correct for Miss Williams to remain at the Grove, Mr. Meadows had strongly recommended her to a client of his at Wolstone, a nail and wire manufacturer, in whose large house Miss Williams had been now for a year domesticated.

People may be domesticated without being tamed; and Miss Williams, though for years a governess, — sometimes to boys, sometimes to girls, sometimes to both, a nursery-governess one year, “a lady capable of the higher branches

of education" the next,—still hated teaching, and loved adventure. She had now, by habit, indeed, become a sort of female Dalgetty, ready for any service, indifferent to all; but the girlish heart still throbbed at thirty-three, hating the school-room, loving ear-rings, in spite of Miss Towers, whose first complaints were on this point, desiring matrimony much, admiration much, and always liking her boy pupils better than the girls, Miss Williams still hoped and still flirted.

Miss Williams imposed upon those who first saw her the opinion that she was handsome: her teeth were so good, her blue eyes so laughing, her complexion so brilliant; but criticism condemned her features. She came now for a month's holiday, resolved to make the most of it; indifferent whether she captivated Mr. Meadows or Loftus—so that it were some one—in high spirits, and radiant in the lilac riband, and pink muslin of the best shop in the market-place of Wolstone. She caressed Adeline with the greater fondness, as she saw Mr. Meadows looking down upon her from his dressing-room window. Suddenly she started back.

“But, bless me! how ill you look! Shocking! dear, dear, Adeline! (with a glance at the dressing-room.) I must let Mr. Meadows see it—he *must* see it—he must be told of it—dear man, I cannot bear to make him anxious, though I do love that dear Mr. Meadows; and Loftus! he will be miserable; why, you’re as thin! dear, sweet, darling Adeline,—tell me, love, what *is* the matter with you. Remember, dearest, you have no mother——” She paused, for Adeline, throwing her arms round the neck of a friend, whom she had known from her infancy, wept passionately.

Miss Williams could have wished this scene had not been under the portico, which Mr. Meadows’ window did not overlook, but she was really good-natured, and her tears flowed readily upon every occasion.

“I know—I know what it is; the old complaint—an affair of the heart; I have had so many of them, dear girl, if *I* cannot feel for you, I don’t know who can. But come, go with me into my room, you can dress and curl there; and the servants will see us,” added the poor governess, accustomed, like too many of her unhappy class, to think much of what the

servants say and observe,—“Come up with me.—Betty, tell Mr. Meadows he must let the dinner-bell ring half an hour later—he must give Miss Adeline a little time to dress—she is not well—the cook can put the dinner back;—I forgot, dear Adeline—your papa has brought some fish in with him from Wolstone:—Betty, tell cook—I know they are fried—to let them stand on a sieve before the meat-screen, and they will be all the drier or nicer for waiting,—and now, dear, dear girl, if you know how I feel for you—no one but those who have suffered as you and I have done *can* tell—oh! it’s dreadful to think of any one you love forsaking you! It has happened to me so often.”

To Adeline’s memory dim reminiscences of Miss Williams’s active mind recurred, coupled with the recollection that the deceased Mrs Meadows had said, “that if Miss Williams had a fault, it was the love of ordering other people’s servants;” so she felt no surprise at the kind zeal manifested for Mr. Meadows’ favourite fish, nor did the tenacity of a young housekeeper lead her to resent the interference. It was not thought possible in Mr. Meadows’ family that Miss Williams could

do wrong. She was as free from the power of sinning as kings and queens, — and if ever Adeline bestowed a thought upon the difference of the circumstances in which she and Miss Williams were placed, her devotion to the latter was increased ten-fold; for, with the generosity of youth, she felt as if there was a degree of injustice in her own superior destiny to that of her own and her mother's friend.

“And now, dearest,” resumed Miss Williams, supporting Adeline into the best bed-room, and throwing open the window—“tell me all about it. Oh! you have been merely frightened have you? Is that all? — and who did you say was with you when all this happened?”

“Mr. Gadsden” —

“Mr. Gadsden! then that explains all! no wonder that Mr. Meadows objects, — a curate! — and, my dear child, he's the greatest flirt alive. He ruined the peace of mind of a very sweet girl, the youngest Miss Morgan of Cubbington. Her lungs are in such a state! And it all began with Mr. Gadsden lunching there between services; young Morgan of Cubbington at last spoke to him, and said that his sister's health and peace required some

explanation — (let me do your hair for you, love)—and he then answered, he had no intentions. Wasn't it shameful?"

"But I don't believe he meant anything," answered Adeline, languidly.

"No, my sweet, I dare say you don't believe it. We poor infatuated girls never do believe till experience teaches us. Then you haven't heard about the widow, Mrs. Windham of Summer Grove? It went so far there, that I know *she* spoke to Miss Paine about her dresses. Miss Paine shewed me a lovely lutestring, a pink and white shot — darling child, I am an old hand at these matters—I can tell—I can tell when a man does mean and does *not* mean anything —my poor heart has been perforated so many times."

"I hear papa's voice," said Adeline rising, and trying to smile, she kissed her friend, saying, "You do me good—do us all good,—come, there is the dinner bell, and ask me no more questions now."

"Now! and what a sigh!" returned Miss Williams, with a parting look at the glass.

Mr. Meadows, if he had a failing, it was that of not bearing to be kept waiting for

dinner—and this is a great failing: for how many more agreeable circumstances in life are there than dinner! A spacious dining-room, covered with a handsome Turkey carpet, received the party, and all around looked new and comfortable; wealth was implied, not displayed. All was good; the wine, not too liberally proffered, was very good—Sherry, Madeira, and Port; none of your French thin deceptions:—a little raisin wine, one last remnant of old economy, was introduced after dinner, preferred by Miss Williams, as she declared. The dinner was neat, plain, done to a turn, plentiful. There was a degree of care shewn in everything; care that everything should be nice, care that nothing should be extravagant; for Mr. Meadows had lived long in those frugal and money-getting habits which men never lose, and which his now, it is to be hoped, sainted father, an honest attorney, whose picture, in a single-breasted drab coat, white stock, and scratch wig, hung over the dining-room chimney-piece, had transmitted to him along with other valuable qualities; one of these was liberality.

“No one,” it was said in Northington, “did

things more handsomely, when he did do them (to speak in colloquial phrase), than Mr. Meadows." Mrs. Hannah More says: "I never found any but plain, unostentatious people do generous actions." Mr. Meadows was an instance of the truth of this axiom. He could not bear to have an unnecessary fire lighted; but he pensioned off all his old servants. To his death he never had a footman to wait at table. It was wonderful that a man, so naturally tender to woman-kind, could bear to have his plate changed and dishes carried in by females: some called it parsimony, since all knew that Mr. Meadows could buy up half the county, if he pleased. Gentle reader, it was habit. Liveries he abominated; and Hodge, who drove the phæton, never had anything but a pepper-and-salt suit.

Mr. Loftus Meadows was quite another thing. He had a most amazing conviction that he was, or thereabouts, one of the very first persons in existence. His narrow sphere had once been enlarged by a two years' residence in London. But the London clients among the professional men had, on his

worthy father's account, paid him such attention, that he had come down twenty times more priggish than he went. This eminent person had a tall, slight figure; with a stoop, from which I never yet saw men of the desk, namely hack-writers at the Museum, bookkeepers at haberdashers' shops, clerks in public offices or banks, and drawing-masters, exempt. These all droop like willows over their plates at dinner; uprightness of carriage, that attribute of humanity, is, with them, the exception, not the rule, of their deportment.

Mr. Loftus had marked features, a high sharp nose, a narrow forehead, and a mouth which turned down at the corners. His hair was auburn, and was carefully curled over his brow. He generally, from infinite conceit more than from necessity, wore spectacles. He spoke slowly, with great and marked expression; which, like a handsome frame around a bad picture, seemed usually more than the common-places which he uttered were worthy of. Such was the brother of Adeline. Many may wonder that so unsophisticated a being could be thus kindred to so solemn a fool—that most atrocious thing in nature—for a merry

fool is endurable : to this I answer—it is often so. Families, like flowers on the same bush, are some weak, some strong : the general features may be alike, the individual attributes totally different.

The party became very cheerful. No one could be long grave where Miss Williams was ; though deep as Satan, she had an apparent openness which was very fascinating. Mr. Meadows was just now her game—yet she thought Loftus a nice young man. At first Loftus, who was considered at Northington rather “ high,” only stiffly bowed to her—giving her that peculiar and brief bend, which says, “ avaunt,” with a half-offended air, which is thought by young men of Loftus’ stamp to be exclusive and genteel. But Miss Williams, who had courage enough to face a regiment of Loftuses, had no notion of such a rubicon between her and any marriageable man.

“ Nay, I must have a shake of your hand—what, Loftus ! you and I who have played on the carpet often together !”

Then she gazed at him with evident admiration, whispering to Adeline, “ how handsome

that dear boy is grown!" — and no Loftus could stand that.

Before the fried fish was sent away, Loftus began to return the kind glances of his opposite neighbour, and to converse. He had a provokingly tiresome antiquarian turn, which his wiser father quizzed, and yet was proud of; and which now furnished Miss Williams with an opportunity for that bantering which ladies of her sort so much love.

"Then I suppose you've been at the top of some old church all day, Loftus," she began, when some pompous display of heraldic knowledge had unfolded the peculiar bent of the young man's mind, "whilst dear, frightened Adeline has been scared by a bull."

"By a bull!" said Mr. Meadows, "I had not heard of this. Where was it, Adeline?"

"I was walking, sir, in the Woodcote meadows," replied Adeline, with a deep blush, and averting her face from her father's stern eye. And she gave a little detail of the affair.

"And who is this Sir Tufton?" asked Miss Williams; "a nephew of old Sir Everard, pray; or his son, or cousin, or what?"

“A nephew,” said Loftus; “and a collateral branch of the noble house of Tyrawley, therefore, a descendant from that Lady Tyrawley, famous at the Court of George the Second for her absence of mind. She,” he added, affectedly, “who stumbled against a post at Tunbridge Wells, and then curtseyed, and begged her ladyship’s pardon.”

“Ha, ha, ha! excellent, Loftus. And pray does Sir Tufton visit here—does he make himself agreeable?” asked Miss Williams, with a glance at Adeline.

“Bless you, my dear madam,” quoth Mr. Meadows, whilst he fagged away at the dissection of a capon, “he’s only just come back to Northington Court. The late proprietor left the property in a most dilapidated state; there were executions in the house when Sir Everard died, and the estate is mortgaged, as those of some of Sir Tufton’s neighbours are.”

“Dear me, what a pity, and he of such an old family! Well, better to be a poor girl like me, without a shilling to bless myself with, than to have an estate, and not to have it—is it not, Mr. Meadows? I know

you could not bear it — *you* could not stand that. How miserable *you* would be to owe one shilling."

Mr. Meadows, though perhaps inwardly congratulating himself that whilst these haughty county-gentlemen looked down upon their attorney, they might envy him his safe position, said nothing: — yet he was not above the littleness of liking Miss Williams' hint — and a calm satisfaction was diffused over his countenance.

"Sir Tufton," pursued Loftus, "married into the Anglesea family, an Annesley, who deceased last year — and I fancy, sir, no less a sum than 20,000*l.* came to him after her death?"

"A mere paltry pittance for a baronet," said Miss Williams; "if that is all he has, I pity him; and to keep up that fine old place, too!"

"Ah," observed Mr. Meadows, gravely; "you are right, Miss Williams; the wretchedness of having rank without means has made many a man prematurely old; but when to that calamity are added extravagant habits and careless prodigality, I question whether there is any lot so truly pitiable."

He paused, for the drooping attitude of his daughter disarmed him.

“Go on,” said Miss Williams, with a fixed look of admiration; “it is so instructive to us to hear you talk. Every one,” she pursued, warming into enthusiasm, “every one looks up to you;—I know not a man respected anywhere as Mr. Meadows is.”

Mr. Meadows, whose weak side was love of popular approbation, tried to look indifferent, whilst Loftus, whose weak head could not carry strong potations, exclaimed, “Why yes! I conclude my father *has* a right to be thought of in the county;—there’s even Mr. Floyer of Woodcote, who’s a great man at Newmarket, a mighty great man at St. James’s-street; there’s even he, indebted to our office.”

“Hush,” said Mr. Meadows, in a peremptory tone, “no office secrets here, if you please, Loftus. Adeline, let us have tea,” and rising with the ladies, Mr. Meadows, as they turned into the drawing-room, went to repose in a great leather easy chair, made before comfort and spring cushions were appreciated, in his little study.

Loftus, too wise and too important to commune with womankind, opened the glass-door, and went into the office, to hold forth to Mr. Brooksbank, the head clerk, who was obliged to listen and be civil to his master's son, when he talked about actions of trover, *nisi prius*, and the like, though he knew all the while that Mr. Loftus had very little law in him.

Adeline, meantime, and Miss Williams, seated themselves in the drawing-room. It was a square room, substantially furnished during the late Mrs. Meadows' lifetime; and, conformably to her quiet taste, it was entirely fitted up with blue, cool and calm as was her disposition. Everything was kept by Mr. Meadows' wish in the precise order in which a beloved and lamented wife had left it. All was consequently papered up and covered. The looking-glass had never seen daylight, for, at present, there had been no company in the house since Mrs. Meadows died. It shone dimly through gauze. The grate, new and bright from Wolstone, was garnished with streamers of silver paper; never had it been contaminated by a fire. The curtains were in bags; the bell-ropes in curl-papers; and over

the blue-and-white chequers of the carpet, strips of brown holland were laid to shew where you must *not* tread. The frames of two pictures, Mr. and Mrs. Meadows, the only objects that broke the cold sameness of the super-clean walls, were carefully preserved from flies by muslin; and, as if this were not enough, a large paper fly-catcher, suspended where in modern days we hang a lamp, danced in the middle of the room.

Mr. Meadows, in powder, a voluminous white neckcloth, blue coat and metal buttons, a buff waistcoat, and a brooch of a half-crown size stuck upon an ample and double white cambric frill, (the agony-point of laundresses,) was but little indebted to the artist, who, annually visiting Wolstone, had transmitted to posterity many of Mr. Meadows' good clients and relatives. The white hair, the buff waistcoat, all flared away independent of each other, and struck the eye as so many different points. The face was hard, sullen, and repulsive; to such extremities do inferior painters always reduce their victims. It was vain that an attempt was made to convey a reflective and literary turn to the portrait by placing in one

hand a letter, whilst the other rested on a book. Mr. Meadows, in spite of this, looked cold-blooded and gloomy; and the kindest and most upright of men had dark and sinister designs painted on his countenance.

Mrs. Meadows, on the contrary, looked light and airy, and scarcely respectable. She was depicted in a small gipsy hat, tied down on her head with a pink silk-handkerchief. Three small, stiff curls hung on either side of her pink-and-white cheeks; her waist, after the fashion of those days, was almost up to her chin, with a narrow strip of blue riband running round it; whilst not a plait disturbed the white muslin skirt, which seemed, according to the custom of the times, folded around the form. Mrs. Meadows held a rose in one hand, and was gazing affectionately at her husband, whose picture, in miniature, set round with pearls, hung from her waist, displaying again the adored features. Those who can remember Mrs. Mountain, or Mrs. Bland, singing at Vauxhall, may form an idea how respectable poor, good, correct Mrs. Meadows really did look.

Mr. Meadows' father and mother hung side-

by-side on the opposite wall, seemingly as if to give date to different costumes. The bobwig, single-breasted coat, ruffled hand of Mr. Meadows senior, were ancestors to Mr. Meadows junior, and his flashy suit; whilst Mrs. Meadows senior wore a cushion and a mob on her upraised locks; a muslin handkerchief elevated on wire to a pigeon-breasted form, allowed no display, save a thin throat guarded by a band of black velvet; the only ornament, except a small pearl in each ear. Such were the progenitors of the fair Adeline and of the important Loftus.

CHAPTER IV.

“Come now, all ye social powers,
Shed your influence o'er us ;
Crown with joy, the present hours,
Enliven those before us.”—*Old Song.*

“WELL! this *is* better than sitting with the little Middletons at dessert, or looking over Miss Hester's sampler, or Miss Phillis's pot-hooks! How you have improved the garden; geraniums, too, and roses de Meaux! Whose taste is that new parterre?”

Thus spoke Miss Williams, lounging on a settee, which, since Mrs. Meadows' death, was sometimes brought forth from its useless position in a corner, and placed near the window.

“But, bless me, who has Loftus with him now? Who is that very nice-looking little man, holding up his skirts from the sweet-briar hedge?”

“It is Mr. Gadsden,” replied Adeline, rising to ring for tea.

“Mr. Gadsden! so he is allowed to visit! Well, I am glad of that, I am glad Mr. Meadows is so liberal and indulgent as not to crush the thing at once. But I shall take care Mr. Gadsden does not flirt with *me*, Adeline; I shall take care to let him know my opinion of male flirts, and — see, he is coming this way! He really is a very nice-looking man, and if he looks well aside of dear Loftus, he must look well,” she added in a higher key, as Loftus now stood with his back near the window.

Mr. Gadsden only came, as he hastened to assure Miss Meadows, to settle a little business with Mr. Meadows, who was churchwarden; but as he *had* come, he “hoped that Miss Meadows was not the worse for her walk to-day.”

The clergyman, as he spoke, raised his hat to Miss Williams, pompously introduced by Loftus.

“I can’t bear him; he’s a male flirt, a thing I detest,” whispered Miss Williams to Adeline, as the gentlemen, after the fashion of country

beaux, drew off to converse together. "He shall not flirt with *me*."

"Take care," returned Adeline, smiling, "for the Curate is reckoned irresistible. Loftus, will you tell papa that tea is ready? Mr. Gadsden, you will take tea with us?"

Mr. Gadsden hesitated, jealous and scrupulous now in his actions where ladies were concerned, and more especially anxious on that day that the two circumstances, the rencontre of the morning and the visit of the evening, should not be coupled together by the Northington people. But he was a clergyman and a bachelor; and a glance at the well-ordered tea-table, the shining cream-jug, the hissing urn, the tea-pot, already in operation, and the gentle and lovely aspect of two ladies, had their influence — he sat down.

As he sat down, Miss Williams started up. "I must go and call dear Mr. Meadows to tea myself, Loftus has been detained." She flew towards the door, and Mr. Gadsden, sensitive on points of gallantry, flew after her. Their hands were on the door-handle at the same minute.

Miss Williams drew back with an air of

dignity, as much as to say, "Flirt, approach me not;" and whilst a momentary pause ensued, Mr. Meadows gravely, and with the heavy footstep of a man no longer active, walked into the room.

"Loftus has been detained; begin tea," he said to Adeline; there was a paleness about his mouth, and a hurried, almost agitated, manner, that surprised Adeline; but she fulfilled "woman's mission" — was silent and patient, and made tea when she was told.

In a few minutes Loftus entered with an excited, startled air; a sort of out-of-breath manner, without apparently having been running. He looked at his father expressively, and a nervous twitch, denoting some degree of passion, played upon the features of Mr. Meadows.

Miss Williams, keen as the keenest of her sex, observed all this; but Adeline was totally unconscious of anything peculiar. But Miss Williams had an intuitive perception of all that she ought not to see, — an instinctive knowledge of all that she ought not to know.

"Something has happened," she thought, "in which Adeline is concerned; with what a

fond compassionate look her father's eyes are fixed upon her. I will get it out of Loftus. 'Tis not Mr. Gadsden—no—but really he's an agreeable gentlemanly man. I must, however, let him know my opinion of flirts in general."

Thus reflecting, Miss Williams had that evening occupation for her restless mind, somewhat more amusing than Pinnock's Catechisms, although they do embrace every possible object of creation. She had to watch Mr. Meadows' softened and anxious looks;—to see his eyes for ever turned with the fondest gaze upon his daughter, sighing once or twice,—for even attorneys can sigh—as he saw her dejected looks directed to the parterre of geraniums which Miss Williams had commended.

Then Miss Williams had to keep in good odour with Loftus, who, as she plainly perceived, was the lord-paramount of the house,—to throw in an acquiescence with his crude opinions; to laugh at his essays in the charming art of punning; to gaze upon him with admiring eyes as he handed her tea, or offered the bread and butter. Then it was her cue not to give up Mr. Gadsden as a case utterly lost and hopeless, for the poor man might have

been unjustly dealt by, and might have been fallen in love with against his will. At any rate, glory would attend the happy woman who should fix his wandering course at last. With Mr. Gadsden, Miss Williams adopted a far less decided plan than with Loftus; he was older, and required more finesse, more skilful tactics. A direct attack would alarm his prudery, and Miss Williams was too clever to do that. She forbore all banter, talked of clergymen, whose profession she owned she adored,—of schools, Lancasterian and Bell, warmly advocating the latter; she confessed it was her weakness, but she hated dissenters, preferring even Roman Catholics. But she was “very particular; there was scarcely a clergyman in Wolstone she liked to hear, except dear, good, old, fat Mr. Bircham of St. Abb’s, and he, dear man, had lost his teeth. It would be a treat to hear a good sermon again.”

Mr. Gadsden started at this conclusion, and was thrown off his guard by a compliment, not very usual, to his preaching. For the widows and maidens whose hearts he had ruined, never said that he did more than read prayers well; and he certainly was flattered that in North-

ington he must, from this hint, be considered a good preacher. He took an opportunity of handing the muffin across to Miss Williams, and remarking that he did not know if, like him, she was ever in the habit of dining early.

“Not usually, sir,” returned Miss Williams somewhat loftily, “I dine with the family. I suppose, by your question, you’re aware of my situation, and I assure you I am aware of it too. I only wish to forget it while I am with my dear friends here, who make me so welcome. As to dining early, I think it quite enough to sit down before a round of boiled beef with those children at one, without doing more than carve for them. Heigho! I shall make a capital wife, if ever my time comes.”

Mr. Gadsden felt quite pained that he had hurt Miss Williams’ feelings, and endeavoured to bring the conversation back to schools and preachers.

“You suppose, I fancy, that I can think of nothing but education, Mr. Gadsden. Now I do assure you, I hate the subject. If there’s one thing more than another that I dislike, it is a pair of globes, that insignia of our profes-

sion; so pray let us have done with teaching the young ideas."

Mr. Gadsden felt a little piqued, and looked a little disconcerted.

"Well, we won't quarrel," cried Miss Williams, with a smile, "let us be good friends. I want you to tell me, Mr. Gadsden, the history of the church-steeple," she added, stepping out on the lawn. "I know there's some old story connected with it. How I admire that dear old church; there is nothing like Northington church — nothing like Northington altogether."

Mr. Gadsden, like most clergymen, was proud of having a handsome church to preach in, and, in his mind, the commanding old structure was coupled with the association of his own small person in gown and bands.

He stepped out on the lawn with Miss Williams; whilst Adeline, gladly escaping from conversation, strayed into the shrubbery beyond, and left Mr. Gadsden to all the dangers of a *tête-à-tête*.

CHAPTER V.

“ Oh ! why should vows so fondly made
Be broken, ere the morrow ?
To one who loved as never maid
Loved in this world of sorrow ? ”—Hogg.

THE neighbouring town of Wolstone, to which reference has been made, comprised manufactures of great importance, manufacturers of astounding wealth, and, like all such places, looked poor and degraded. Suburbs of low houses, without the redeeming feature of a small garden to soften their wretchedness, extended into a country which nature had in her decrees set down as fertile and fair ; and through these one was beguiled by curiosity or business, never by pleasure, into a busy, dirty, and confusing square, called the Bull-ring ;— a term denoting the former ferocity of the inhabitants who patronised the Bull-ring, and the present vulgarity of those who retained

the term. Herein was the principal inn; and hence were coaches ever setting off and coming in; — horns blowing, — cattle lowing, — sheep bleating, and farmers insulting the letter *h* in every phrase; for the dialect of the county in which Wolstone is seated, is not so broad as that of Lancashire, nor so incomprehensible as that of Somersetshire: it has not the extreme viciousness of the Cockney dialect, nor the provoking mouthing of the Yorkshire and Cumberland; but it is, perhaps, more ludicrous than any, from the unaccountable liberties taken with vowels, and the incurable aversion to aspirate that valuable letter, upon which even Byron thought it worth while to make a parody.

The Bull-ring of Wolstone collected on a market or fair-day all those who did the deeds of darkness on ordinary occasions. The master nail-maker quitted his works, and the iron-founder rode in from some adjacent village on a horse that even Sir Tufton Tyrawley might have envied; the brass-founder and the pin-manufacturer might be seen in close contact; whilst ever and anon, the meek but factious professional men of the town might be seen

threading their way among the dark-complexioned crowd.

Wolstone, once the seat of bitter religious feuds, had but recently recovered from the blight which controversies, ending in actual riots, had showered over its best interests. Man had risen against man, woman railed against woman. A high church party and a dissenting party had long divided, and even infuriated, society. It had been thought in Wolstone, and it was still thought, that points which the wisdom of the Most High hath left obscure, were to be elucidated by their finite knowledge, and were worthy to overthrow peace, charity, and brotherhood.

The town had been partially restored by Time,—that great physician,—from the temporary madness which had driven some of the most conscientious of her citizens from its precincts. The rector of the high church no longer turned his back at a public dinner upon the minister of one of the three denominations who had been called to the old meeting-house. The minister no longer in his sermons termed the rector, “my misguided brother;”—grievances were hushed, wounds cicatrized, and a

decorous, though cold civility, was maintained even between the shovel-hat of the rector and the shabby black of the school-keeping minister. A separation, defined, and considered irrevocable, subsisted, nevertheless, between the two parties, high and low. The high were, also, genteel; the low, vulgar: the high, were usually poor, the low, rich; for the great manufacturers, who rose from workmen, asserted an independence of mind in religion, as well as in other matters; and were, besides, attached to the meeting-house in which their youth had once felt the sweets of importance, the dignity of schism, and the superiority of not being tied down by prejudice and forms.

This was, however, the more intelligent set of the two. The church-party were a stiff, card-playing, plain-dressing set, whose ideas became annually more and more contracted from their insulated condition. The dissenters were speculative and thriving, whose very deviation from the church shewed a thirst for novelty; and whose pride, in pointing out the right way, promoted liberality. All improvements in the town, all that aided the poor, or made the rich comfortable, was projected by

their intelligence, set on foot by their means, completed by their wealth.

It was into this busy and factious region that Adeline and Miss Williams drove one morning soon after the events of the last chapter. They journeyed in a little pony-carriage, driven by Adeline, with a boy as out-rider, behind. Miss Williams had declared over and over again that she never wished to see Wolstone until she *must* go back; yet the influence of the world was wafted by some wind or other to Northington; and, upon some pretext or other, she had teased Adeline to go to Wolstone, which bore the same relation to Northington that London does to Hampstead.

Adeline, with the restlessness of an unhappy person, assented, not without satisfaction. Day after day she had expected an answer to her letter from Stanhope Floyer, but in vain. She felt that she was deserted — given up; and though she had begged him to desert her, she had commanded him to give her up, her heart sank when she believed herself obeyed.

She drove, therefore, into Wolstone, without any precise idea wherefore, and forgetting

that it was Whit-Monday, and a day of disturbance in that commercial region. In the first place, it was also the Statute,—that is, a fair enacted by statute was annually held that day; in other words, this fair was called the *mop*: servants were hired at the mop, who could neither be dismissed nor leave their places for six months afterwards. The statute, or mop, was thronged by cattle, bullocks especially; a frightful mass of horns and hoofs were entangled in the Bull-ring, or market-place; whilst a procession of woolcombers, by charter obliged to walk that day in a company, was issuing from the Hen and Chickens inn. Banners with the golden-fleece, and poles with shining tops, rose amid the restless, horned crew; blue ribands streamed, bells rang, and sheep bleated. Amid crockery-ware and baskets of poultry, and just within sight of the Town-hall, drove Adeline, encouraged to proceed by the exhortations of her pleasure-loving companion.

“ Dear Adeline, don’t be afraid!—I’ll take the reins myself. There’s no impropriety that I see in passing through the crowd; and these animals can’t think of sticking us

through with their horns: they are more frightened at us, than we at them."

"I wish I had not come," answered Adeline in a low tone. "I forgot Whit-Monday, and all about it. Well, now we are fairly entangled, and cannot get on;—just before the Hen and Chickens, too! See! dear Louisa,—just put your parasol up before us."

Miss Williams put down her veil, as she glanced at a laughing group of gentlemen, who were leaning and staring out of the inn window. Her veil, being thin, did but set off the brilliancy of her colour, and soften the irregularities of her features. The gentlemen all stared, and one of them exclaimed, "What a beautiful girl!"

"Girl!" returned the other, "a girl of thirty! Look a little to the left; if one could get a glimpse of that face—ha! my fair friend of Northington!"

"But, see," replied the other gentleman, "a heavy timber-cart is wedged in with their little carriage—so ho! Sir Tufton is gone!"

Sir Tufton had, indeed, descended rapidly; the ladies were in no present danger, but much confusion. Miss Williams had been insulted

by a Wolstone artificer, who told her she was "painted," and Adeline was looking wistfully about to see how she could extricate her little carriage. It was in the very middle of the street, with a string of horses linked together by a rope for sale, on one side, and a timber-waggon on the other.

Sir Tufton, self-possessed and gentlemanly, made himself heard as well as he could, and begged "to be of use." He backed the little carriage skilfully out of the confusion; and giving it in charge to Miss Meadows' servant, then offered his arm to assist the ladies to alight. There was an expression of suppressed humour on his lips as he bade the groom take the carriage round, if he could, and meet them in the High Street.

"And which way do you propose bending your course?" inquired Sir Tufton respectfully, bending to speak to Adeline.

"To the New Square," answered Miss Williams. "Don't let us go near those odious Middletons," she whispered to Adeline. "We are going to call at Mr. and Mrs. Smallwood's, the only lady and gentleman in Wolstone."

"Talking of that," remarked Sir Tufton,

“as you have mentioned the sort of caste of which the Wolstone people are composed, I am reminded of what happened to myself. Last Christmas I went up in the mail to London. We stopped at Oxford. It was in the dead of night, when one of those dons, who are born with a Latin grammar in their hands, came up to the guard,—‘Who have you here, my good fellow?’—‘A gentleman from Wolstone, please your honour.’—‘A gentleman from Wolstone! He must be a curiosity. I never saw a gentleman from Wolstone yet. Why, my good fellow, you ought to ring the alarum bell, and call up the town to see him!’ I should not have related this anecdote, Miss Williams, had you not—”

“Oh, you are quite at liberty, Sir Tufton,” answered Miss Williams with ready familiarity, “to say what you please of the Wolstone people. It is not my abiding-place, thank God! I should, indeed, play Ophelia, and drown myself in my dear Mr. Meadows’ fish-pond if I thought I was to stay here all my life.”

“—An old friend of yours?” whispered Sir Tufton to Adeline.

“ Yes,” replied Adeline, colouring a little. “ I do not think we need trouble you to walk further, Sir Tufton. I see my carriage, and I am not afraid now.”

“ But you will not refuse me the honour of seeing you safe at Mrs. Smallpeace’s—Smallwood’s—door; besides, your friend has half-promised to show me a curiosity.”

Adeline answered not, and Sir Tufton walked pertinaciously by her side; crossed when she crossed, stopped when she stopped; until at last, after threading many streets, still by her side, he reached the New Square.

It was a dingy enclosure, which from its dusky and begrimed appearance, might have been antique, yet it had the vulgarity of a recent date. A small plot in the centre, encompassed with some substantial iron rails, contained some sooty trees. A tall, smoke-dyed church-steeple frowned on the trees; whilst ever and anon the funeral bell announced that some dingy denizen of manufacturing and thickly-peopled Wolstone, was carried to a churchyard already teeming with the dead. New Square was the professional and court end of Wolstone. “ Denby and

Sadler, surgeons," figured over one door; "Mr. Gray, solicitor," on another; a worthy curate turned out of a third; and Adeline and Miss Williams stopped at a fourth, which had no name at all to designate the profession of its genteel inhabitants.

"And now," said Sir Tufton, remaining on the pavement, whilst Adeline and Miss Williams ascended the steps, "my vocation is fulfilled — I have seen you safe at your destination, good morning."

"Good heavens, Adeline, he is gone," cried Miss Williams; "I thought he was coming in. Now he would have admired Mrs. Smallwood so much, and I should like him to have seen that we had such friends."

—And Miss Williams looked wistfully after the departing Baronet, as he turned the corner of the Square.

A maid servant opened the door, and the ladies went in. They were shewn into a back sitting-room on the ground-floor, where a certain air of elegant untidiness denoted the lady-like superiority of Mrs. Smallwood. There was a new cabinet pianoforte open, with one of Mazzinghi's last compositions on

it; the room was hung round with sepia drawings of figures, with bones and sinews as sharp as edged-tools. There was Cicero, and here was Demosthenes; there were the nine Muses, and Cupid and Psyche, and a chalk copy of a recently-published print of Innocence, by Boydell, with a lamb at her feet. It required Lemprière's dictionary to comprehend the whole.

The days of lambs'-wool were anticipated by those of velvet-painting. Oh! the cabbage-roses and pæonies, gigantic blue bells and spreading honeysuckles, that bloomed on a large piece of this flaring sort of painting, framed, glazed, and hung up! A cabinet of black-and-white work (imitation of ebony and ivory) was begun at the end of the room, and a villanous-looking stream of lamp-black flowed across an earthenware pallet. Bane of my youth! remembered with a head-ache, — can I wish to recal those days when Chinese, bald-headed boys, dumb-waiter trees, and flies and birds, were necessarily worked into what was called in compliment an Indian Cabinet! Mrs. Smallwood had twenty drawers in her cabinet, each of which was painted by a friend.

“How beautiful!” was Miss Williams’ exclamation, as she stood waiting till the only lady in Wolstone was visible. “These are the very best Chinese figures I ever saw. How very fine those eyebrows are — and what loves of eyes! And then, that lady with the fan, the feet scarcely large enough to stand upon! Charming!”

The all-accomplished Mrs. Smallwood at this instant entered the room. She had acquired much of her famed gentility, by a coldness and composure of manner, which always infers conscious superiority. This was never relaxed except to Miss Williams, who was her very particular friend. The two ladies flew into each others’ arms, and remained for some moments in a warm embrace. No one would suppose they had only parted some days previously. Adeline then received a cold touch of Mrs. Smallwood’s hand, and then, the adventures of the journey, the meeting with Sir Tufton, and the parting with him at Mrs. Smallwood’s very door, were vigorously related by Miss Williams.

“Don’t start!” said Mrs. Smallwood, as her friend concluded; and a tall figure arose

from a garden-seat, hitherto unperceived, near the window, and moved away; — “it’s only a ward of Mr. Smallwood’s; he is on his way to Oxford, that is all. A surprisingly clever young man,—oh, by-the-bye, Miss Meadows, we are going to make up a little party on Friday, can you come, and bring your brother, Loftus. I am so badly off for beaux, and you know there are so few in Wolstone one *can* ask; we don’t go into the common run of society here, do we, Louisa?”

“I should hope not, — Loftus *must* come, and dear Adeline, — and oh, if we could get Sir Tufton —”

“It would only be to annoy and mortify us,” interposed Adeline, quickly. “I feel sure that that class of persons to which Sir Tufton belongs, consider themselves of a different order of beings to *us*, however politeness may disguise it.”

“Then they may, if they please,” cried Miss Williams, heroically. “I should like to know who Sir Tufton is — only a baronet — and when I lived in the Honourable Mrs. Orger’s family, I am sure I heard baronets enough looked down upon and thought

nothing of, indeed; — nothing compared to the nobility, for instance.”

“ Besides,” urged Adeline, “ I have no regular acquaintance with Sir Tufton, only accidental, and I confess I could not lead to such a thing as an invitation even to our own house.”

“ Well, then,” replied Miss Williams, with her usual address, “ we will bring Loftus; and I am sure he will grace the room as much as any baronet.”

To this Mrs. Smallwood bowed assent, and the ball on the ensuing Friday was agreed on.

Then came all the difficulties and intricacies of country-town etiquette.

“ I have asked the three Miss Bookers, and the six Miss Hibetsons’, with one brother,” said Mrs. Smallwood, counting on her fingers; “ the Miss Frances, with two; (by-the-bye, Matilda France has got her hair in corkscrew ringlets now, Louisa,) and Patty and Bessy Spurrutt, with their cousin, the curate of Denham; but, unfortunately, the rector and his wife have accepted, and I cannot ask the Smiths; — they are dissenters.”

“I am sorry for that; for though they are Independents, I think Mr. Hugh Smith a very nice young man,” observed Louisa.

“And then, you know, we cannot ask the Welshfords and the Harrises together. They not only don't meet, but turn their backs upon each other. There is young Mr. Capper, of the high church party, a nice beau for you, Louisa.”

“—And we must bring Mr. Gadsden, Adeline. He really has been scandalised. I consider him by no means a flirt, and quite unexceptionable.”

“Take care; for so have most of his be-guiled victims done likewise. Friday will be the test of his real merits or demerits, for *with* him I can only make up nine beaux,” said Mrs. Smallwood.

“But you spoke of a ward, and I am sure I saw the tails of a coat somewhere;” cried Miss Williams, with a loud laugh. “What is he? Not a travelling-clerk to some great London warehouse, I hope,—a description of gentlemen I am doomed to be civil to at the Middletons, and whom they think so *high*, because they come from Friday Street or Watling

Street; London is London to them, the immediate quarter matters not. Ah, me! when I think of my last fatal attachment, it makes me sigh. Such a charming man!—quite a hero! a lieutenant of the Hector; in which, Adeline, you heard Loftus say the crew suffered so in the North Seas; many returning with scarcely a finger,—all frozen off; but my lost friend had his full complement. Oh, dear! He was ordered off when I do think it would have ended in something. It makes me so indifferent to other men. But your ward, Eleanor, dear!”

“I don’t know that he will be here,” replied Mrs. Smallwood, a little confused; “his guardian is a client of Mr. Smallwood’s, who regulates the young gentleman’s education whilst the other guardian is abroad. He goes away to-morrow, I believe.”

“Can’t you get him to stay — possibly? Or won’t Mr. Smallwood let him for fear he should lose his heart. ’Tis a good plan when you want to keep a young man, to set him in a draught of air, and give him a sore throat, which dancing always cures; or walk him

well, and sprain his ankle, if he's remarkably agreeable."

"I will see what I can do, Louisa; meantime, I depend on Loftus and Mr. Gadsden."

The pony-chaise was now announced, and Miss Williams, after an adieu such as might have become a parting for the Indies, bustled off the pensive Adeline to the pony-carriage. The streets were now empty, and the public-houses full; bands of servants and labourers, unsuccessful in the "Mop," were departing from the Bull-ring. The roasted ox was giving its last turn; and replenished in courage, though still more dejected in spirits, Adeline drove her friend back to Northington Grove.

CHAPTER VI.

"How hardly I conceal'd my tears,
How oft did I complain,
When many tedious days my fears
Told me I lov'd in vain."

MRS. WHARTON.

Too young, and too much the spoiled child of fortune, to bear her secret sorrows well, Adeline, after intense suffering, took a desperate resolution. She rushed into her father's presence, one day after dinner, and besought him to hear her.

"—I have tried, my dear father, as you bade me, to give Mr. Stanhope Floyer up: I have endeavoured to forget him. But the more I try, the more I think of him. Oh, let me once hear from him, once be sure that he does not think of me, and I shall be contented."

So she thought. But alas! who, that is in love, ever believes that the beloved object is

indifferent ; who so situated is ever convinced, ever contented ? Coldness, contempt, even treachery, are mollified, explained, disbelieved, by the incredulous or self-deceived heart of those who madly love.

Mr. Meadows was taken unawares by his daughter, for he had supposed her to be resigned, since she had not complained. He was also attacked at an unlucky moment, just after his afternoon sleep, when men awake to irritation. He had other reasons for feeling angry at the name of Floyer, so he gently motioned Adeline away, saying, "Pooh, pooh !"

The poor girl retreated, her hands hanging listlessly by her side, the image of despair ; but ere she reached the door, a passion of tears caused her to stop.

"Nobody loves me ; nobody cares for me !" was her mournful exclamation. "Even my father can see—can see me—miserable, and not care about it."

Her father's heavy tread announced that moment that he approached her ; he took her hand, and led her to a seat near him. He reflected that she had no mother, and though he had now learned to remember the deceased

Mrs. Meadows with a widower-like composure, his eyes became moist when he recollected that Adeline no longer possessed that natural *confidante* to whom girls can alone betray the griefs of which they are ashamed.

“—To be candid with you, Adeline,” said he, “all has been settled between Mr. Stanhope Floyer and ourselves—” he stopped; for Adeline seemed like one who has suddenly received an electric shock—speechless, breathless. “To be brief, he has been here. Adeline, compose yourself.”

“Did he not—did he not ask to see me?”

“—Mr. Floyer was well and properly received by Loftus, one night; when, as you may remember, Mr. Gadsden was here. An explanation ensued.”

“By Loftus, sir!—With Loftus!—Did you not see him?”

“I did. And a more ungentlemanly, insolent young man—but I forbear. All is now at an end, for ever. And I rejoice at it much, much, very much. Adeline, if those bitter tears are meant as reproaches to me, I do not merit them. I have acted to the best of my judgment, and for your happiness.”

“Was it *his* wish, with *his* consent, then, that the acquaintance between us was for ever closed?” said the broken-spirited Adeline. “Did *he* desire it?”

The face of woe, the gasp of suffering arrested Mr. Meadows’ reply for some moments.

“I cannot say it was, Adeline. Truth compels me to own that Mr. Floyer’s expressions of regret were strong. But I believe them,” the father added with bitterness, “to have originated in disappointment of a different sort. Mr. Floyer is a necessitous man, Adeline; and, as Loftus did not scruple to point out to him, my means of providing for my children are well-known, and the respectability which a connexion with my family would give him, is well understood.”

“Would give *him*?” repeated Adeline, with surprise; her unsophisticated mind had yet to learn the self-importance which the consciousness of well-doing in the world bestows. She knew Loftus’s indomitable conceit, narrowness, and ignorance of society, and saw that he had been working on the mind of a father, over whom he had considerable influence.

“Therefore, my dear child, be comforted, and good night. I am sure Miss Williams will give you the same advice as myself, so think no more of a ruined man. What would the world say if I bestowed your hand on a turf-hunter and a gamester — on one whose acres of park-land are not his own — whose very furniture is mortgaged?”

He stopped, for Adeline shuddered at the recital of her lover's misfortunes. In a few moments she recovered her self-possession.

“If,” she said with firmness, “you decide, as a parent, that I must give up the hope that shall ever be dearest to me, I must — I ought to obey: but I will resist the interference of Loftus, who has no right to control my actions. I will write to Mr. Floyer no more, — but,” she added, in a broken voice, “should circumstances throw me in his way, I cannot pass him as a stranger.”

“I trust, Adeline, to your prudence, and to your respect for me, to act as you ought. I cannot conceal from you that high words passed between us; and I, as a gentleman, cannot meet Mr. Stanhope Floyer again.”

“I am sure, sir, if Mr. Floyer has been wrong, his generous temper will atone — he will acknowledge his error.”

“No apology, no atonement,” exclaimed Mr. Meadows, with violence, “shall ever make me notice that young puppy and scoundrel again.” He turned away, his lips pale with rage; the perspiration absolutely standing on his brow with hatred and wrath towards a fellow-creature. Yet Mr. Meadows was a religious man; went to church morning and afternoon, had all the places marked in a scarlet morocco Bible, looked out the text, and duly received the holy communion. Yet he, like unto thousands similarly religious, good in like manner, would never, even upon atonement, forget, could never forgive; — but considered reconciliation as degradation — meekness, meanness — and regarded it as the highest proof of an exalted spirit to cherish a sense of wrong until injuries were dissolved in the grave alone.

Adeline had seldom seen her father so moved, and his agitation affected her greatly, not for her sake but for his own; for she felt that it must be a fault in her to excite such painful

expressions. Such was the goodness of her nature, that even whilst his words imparted despair, she kissed him, saying :—

“Do not be vexed — I was wrong to irritate you. I will try to for”—her words died away.

“Very well; now this subject is done with, Adeline, let it never be resumed between us — never ! Don't speak of Mr. Floyer — don't mention his name to me. The acquaintance is at an end—quite—entirely—and I am heartily glad of it. Now I have letters to write—withdraw, my dear, and do not dwell on what has passed.”

Adeline withdrew, choking, as she fled along the passages, her tears, only to give vent to them in agony as she bolted her chamber-door, and sank into a chair. It seemed as if all that charmed in this world was for ever vanished — the source and object of thought — the vision of the future — the luxury of recalling the past, for ever gone ! Even hope quenched — joy wholly annihilated. Those who in extreme youth have suffered from what is called a disappointment, will allow that even these strong phrases convey but a very faint impression of that sickness of the heart

which follows a wrench of its accustomed affections. Old, and hardened, as many of us are, we may remember to have felt such a sorrow eat into our very hearts, poisoning every pleasure, and tinging with melancholy every association. Parents too coldly, too unadvisedly, inflict such wounds ; and whilst they are satisfied with their own motives, and are approved by the legion of the prudent, the victim sinks under the silent struggle. It is a common practice to laugh at the notion of dying for love. I believe, if the annals of consumption could be honestly told, many an impulse has been first given by disappointed affections to the latent seeds of that disease, which speeds like an arrow on its way, not to be recalled.

Careless in allowing his daughter to form a rash attachment, Mr. Meadows now did his duty to the uttermost to prevent her from making a rash marriage, and she complained not. After the one effort just described, Adeline remonstrated no more. She rose at the appointed hour, and met her father with affectionate respect ; presided over his household with a gentle grace, walked, read, played, sang.

No one observed whether and how she ate, that most important of avocations to life and exertion. No one saw the loathed breakfast secretly pushed away—the devouring thirst—the unexcitable appetite, scarcely able to conquer more than enough to sustain nature. A mother's eye would have seen all this. But Adeline suffered in silence.

Miss Williams was not her *confidante*, for Adeline's generosity feared to involve her friend in Mr. Meadows' displeasure. Miss Williams, like other low-minded persons, thought herself ill-used by Adeline, in not being told that which her busy, prying mind instinctively found out. A sort of triumph elevated her spirits when she fancied that she had discovered what Adeline would fain have concealed. Nevertheless, such was her taste for intrigue, and her love of playing up to the feelings of others, that she was perpetually throwing out hints such as these:—

“Who, did you say, lives at—I forget the name of the place—Mr. Floyer?” marking all the while the deep blush with which the name was uttered,—“Floyer!”—“And what relation is Mr. Floyer to Lady The—Theodora

Floyer? — First cousin? — Hem! What a pretty, aristocratic name Floyer is!”

“—And what sort of a person may Mr. Stanhope Floyer be?” she fairly asked one day, as Adeline, sitting apart, leaned over her work. “Adeline, sweet, look up; why I shall begin to suspect something if you look down so.” Receiving no reply, Miss Williams went on — “I hear he is desperately handsome, somewhat poor, dreadfully dissipated!”

“Oh, no, no, no!” exclaimed Adeline, with an involuntary start.

“Well, but I like a little spirit in a very young man; and I understand that there was a time when he used to be seen loitering along the village meadows just at the hour when

‘The lowing herds wend slowly o’er the lea.’

You see I have not taught Gray’s elegy to young misses in vain. But, that his song was—‘Let me wander not unseen,’ hey, Adeline? It is very difficult to wander unseen at Northington. And I understand, that at Lady Theodora’s parties, Mr. Floyer and a certain friend of mine (whom I think *beautiful*) used to be sitting in a bay window all the evening, looking up only at the moon-

beams. Well, Adeline, does he never mean to come back to Northington no more? as the little Middletons say. Shall I never see this 'observed of all observers,' Adeline? My own dear, sweet, darling, angel child, have I made you weep?"

Just at this interesting moment when Miss Williams was hanging over her friend, a ring at the door-bell announced a visitor. Miss Williams did not disturb herself, for the consolatory attitude was becoming, and the door opening, Sir Tufton Tyrawley entered the room before Adeline could clear away her tears, and vanish. Miss Williams had, therefore, all the benefit of appearing amiable. She was always familiar; and her ready address might have reassured Sir Tufton had he known what *mauvaise honte* was. It was curious to see these two persons, both conversant with the freemasonry of flirtation, fall into a certain orthodox interchange of glances, jokes, and under-the-rose compliments, the instant they met. Neither admiring the other, *in petto*, and both wary as the Prince of Darkness, it was yet astonishing how much their approximation bore the semblance of a des-

perate, though nascent flame; how much their discourse had of the phraseology of gallantry, their looks the semblance of love.

But whilst Miss Williams drew Sir Tufton forth into an animated, if not over-wise talk, it was manifest, even to her, that poor, down-spirited Adeline was the real object of his visit. To her he spoke little; and, when he did, it was with an immediate change of tone to that which he adopted to Miss Williams, gentle, almost serious, respectful. The very indifference of Adeline was, in truth, a charm to this practised pupil in the science of small-talk; this graduate in the art of saying much and meaning little; this adept in that vast and comprehensive knowledge which makes men frivolous, and women foolish. Sir Tufton had once been a good deal in the gay world; he had, therefore, seen all sorts of women, the uncultivated, the deluded, the very bad. His opinion was, that all women were much the same; all coquettes in their inmost souls. He had practised a certain style of tactics with some success, and he now varied it only according to circumstances. He was not a man of much education, be-

cause he had, early in life, entered the army; but he had excellent natural talents, and a fine taste; the continual enjoyment of good society, and much travelling, had done the rest.

To term the manner in which he went on talking, conversation, would not be exactly correct. Neither is it easy to give a notion of what this said conversation, if so we must term it, was like. The Brighton, Leamington, or Cheltenham ladies, at whose doors cabs, with diminutive tigers, are seen, gaping their very souls out, between three and six, may form an idea of Sir Tufton's conversation. There is a certain manner and grace about that description of men who frequent watering places, a knowingness, a quickness of apprehension, and a politeness, which make their emptiness very endurable. They are very well, indeed, when, during hours of idleness, the philosophic mind of woman must needs submit to a certain portion of *ennui* every afternoon. They are even pleasant; their visits are, at least, as welcome as the newspaper. But pass a long day with one of this class, or stay a week in the country with these men of pleasure, ere you decree them to be endurable for more than a morning call.

Yet the man of science—what a log! the literary pet of the blue coteries—how infinite a bore! But I digress, and must hasten back to Sir Tufton.

Sir Tufton having gone through a well-executed round of well-considered subjects; namely, the beauty of the weather, the lateness, nevertheless, of the spring;—the superiority of summer over winter;—the fineness of the timber about Northington; and, to be profound, the extreme injury which education was doing to the lower classes, on which point he was absolutely warm, rose to depart. There was no subject on which he had found a more cordial acquiescence in Miss Williams, than on the impropriety of “making the poor learned,” and they had actually drawn their chairs closer, in the fervour of their congeniality. “For,” argued Sir Tufton, “if things go on in this way, I shall absolutely have my bailiff or my valet knowing as much as myself.” (The consummation was not afar off.) “Let the poor man learn to read his Bible. I would have him taught *that*, but nothing else; and on no account writing. I shall have my grooms,

forsooth, peeping into my letters when they carry them to the post."

Miss Williams laughed at this, yet "owned it was no laughing matter." "For it is quite shocking," she continued, "to see the pride and conceit of the lower classes since they have learned their A, B, C. The very farmers' daughters carrying their parasols."

"Sedition, infidelity, and dishonesty," Sir Tufton, growing red, remarked, "would be fostered by educating the lower classes."

"Look at the servants in my grandmother's days," cried Miss Williams.

"And my own mother — the Lady Elizabeth Tyrawley's household," said Sir Tufton, "not one of them could read, I will venture to say. And what was the consequence? They would work morning, noon, and night; went to church, as all the lower classes should do; indeed, my mother compelled it. I hope you do not approve of education for the mobility, Miss Meadows?"

Adeline courageously replied that she did, adding, "To a certain extent;" and, "I believe," she gently continued, "that it is never likely to be carried to too great a length.

Those who see much of our parochial schools, have reason to regret that too little rather than too much is done; the untutored capacity cannot adequately comprehend the Bible, so as to make it of vital service. Besides, the memory being cultivated without the understanding, fails upon the slightest disuse. The ignorance of the lower classes in Scripture history is melancholy."

Sir Tufton listened with great deference; owned himself informed, but not convinced; but said he must come some day, and be made a convert of by Miss Meadows.

Meantime, 'ere Miss Williams had done raving about Sir Tufton's "fair white hand, which showed blood"—or the impression of his respectful manners had vanished from Adeline's mind, Mrs. Smallwood's small and select party took place, and the two friends, escorted by Loftus, were whirled away in Mr. Meadows' new cane-coloured chariot to Wolstone.

I cannot help admiring the discrimination of our Transatlantic brethren, who call such routs as combine a little bad singing, a little hot dancing, and a little cold tea, "Sorry

Parties." Such is the corruption which our most corrupting and unworthy descendants have given to the word *soirée*. It must be admitted, in justification of the liberty thus taken with an useful word, that nowhere do people look so sad, make such sorry figures, as when commanded at a month's notice to be gay. Reflections the most melancholy seem to dwell in every bosom; the voice is suppressed, the movements are paralyzed, the thoughts spell-bound. Why they come who manifestly wish for nothing but each other's seats, each other's room, and who vanish often without the interchange of a syllable with their kind, is a problem.

At Mrs. Smallwood's, however,—I speak of fifty or sixty years ago,—a comfortable clatter broke upon the ear as Adeline and her party, tripping through a group of clean maid-servants, varied alone by one boy-creature, drew near to the door of Mrs. Smallwood's drawing-room. A lady and gentleman were singing "The Manly Heart;" and decorum obliged even the impatient Louisa Williams, burning for conquest, to rest awhile upon a neatly carpeted landing-place, whereon several gen-

tleman had taken refuge. It was not long before Miss Williams, pressing the arm of her friend, pointed out to her, leaning against the door-post, a young man of so remarkable and distinguished appearance, that even the modest Adeline could not for some moments withdraw her eyes. It was not alone his height; it was not alone the noble forehead, marked profile, and rich hue of complexion that arrested Adeline's attention. When she first looked at the stranger, his countenance was thoughtful, almost languid; but when he caught her glance, an expression the most animated, a glance full of pleasure played upon his face. To the attributes of youth, and a fine proportion, both in form and face, was added in this unknown gentleman that indescribable something which a continual contact with good society, and with that alone, bestows to the air and movement.

“It is the young man whom we saw the other day,” whispered Miss Williams; “the ward of whom Mrs. Smallwood spoke. I must be introduced to him.” But, ere the resolution could be made known to the hostess, many preliminary forms of bowing, and shak-

ing hands, appearing delighted to see certain persons, regretting the absence of others, and inquiring with tender interest after the numerous young families with which people are everywhere, it seems, endowed, were to be performed. Adeline was laid violent hands upon by Mr. Smallwood, a bustling officious man, in a glowing heat, who led her off to the piano; whilst Loftus, who, following her, and assuring Mr. Smallwood that his sister never sang in large parties, was intercepted by Mr. Gadsden, with a card in his hand; and, happily for those whom he might otherwise have tormented, was seated at a whist-table, there to vent his egotism and involuntary disagreeableness.

Adeline, somewhat bewildered, found herself on a high stool, with the music of "Love in a Village" before her eyes, ere she had recovered her self-possession. Then she took courage to glance round at a circle of Wolstone ladies, who, having finished tea, had nothing to do. They looked awfully dismal; and, to a philosophic eye, it must seem that they had dressed themselves in their very best, to be miserable. Comfortable and happy vulgarity!

genius of true enjoyment! wherefore didst thou on this occasion veil thy face, and place the phantom of gentility before those who would gladly have forgotten that such a spirit existed?

Heavy and toad-like the old ladies looked; some fluttering like poultry, others shrinking into their own thoughts. The young ladies were consciously joyless; and all, whether young or old, were deserted by the gentlemen, who unanimously formed a hedge-row along one side of the room.

“And now,” said Mr. Smallwood, (who conducted the business of the party, as if he thought it a serious affair indeed,) “all we want is, Miss Meadows, for some lady to sing us a song, and I know no one who sings a better song than you do.”

He brandished the snuffers as he spoke; lowered the music stool; looked round; and pronounced an emphatic “hush;” then drew himself up, put his hands in his pocket, and prepared for the attack.

Adeline had been carefully instructed, at school, in every accomplishment that could refine the taste, and unfit her for being the

happy associate of those with whom it was her lot to mix. But no culture would impart that best gift of heaven to the musician—feeling. The rich cadences of her voice went to the heart of the stupid and wise, the vulgar and refined; for they were directed by that ready sensibility which music excites in the young and impassioned. She sang without fear, for she delighted to sing; but she chose a merry ballad, as remote in its tendency from her own feelings as the scene and company were foreign to her inclinations.

She had scarcely finished, when Miss Williams flew across the room to her. “Oh! my dear Adeline, sing ‘Since then I’m doomed,’ Mr. Eustace wants you to sing that.”

“‘Mr. Eustace,’ and who is ‘Mr. Eustace?’”

“The young gentleman we both admired so,” whispered Miss Williams,—“look, look;—and die! for he is perfection!”

Miss Williams spoke with much excitement; for there was an opulent but invincible land-surveyor of great wealth and repute, whose jealousy she would have had no objection to excite.

Adeline just glanced at the young stranger.

She encountered his eyes full fixed upon her. On her side she started.

“A pleasing likeness of that old picture at Sir Tufton Tyrawley’s,” she whispered to Louisa.

“Do you think so?—Shall I tell him that we know Sir Tufton? But it is impossible any one *here* can be related to the Tyrawleys.”

“I should think not,” returned Adeline, as she ran her fingers over the keys.

She thought no more of the stranger—nay, forgot his very existence; her thoughts were in scenes which had passed away; with days gone by. The brief delicious evenings with Lady Theodora Floyer, the vivacity, the grace of her companion there; the contrast became insupportable to her. The room seemed intolerable and oppressive; Adeline rose hastily, and, passing Mr. Smallwood, who was strutting about from lady to lady with official precision, she availed herself of a chair near the window, for she felt as if suffocated.

An old lady who had just quitted the whist-table, offered her a large yellow fan, and looking at her with an air of compassion and of kindness, said:—

“Miss Meadows don't know me. Yet I was an old friend of your mother's, Miss Meadows.”

“Ah, Mrs. Brazier,” said Adeline, placing her hand in that of one of those fat old ladies who acquire the name of ‘motherly women,’ —“I did not see you. I remember indeed—I just remember your being at Northington in dearest mamma's lifetime—ah!—”

“She's gone to a better place! so don't ye fret!” returned Mrs. Brazier, sympathetically, —“many a happy hour have I passed in your house, before you knew who was who.”

“But you have been absent, Mrs. Brazier?”

“I have been visiting my married daughters,” returned Mrs. Brazier, drily, “and we proceed to-morrow — that is, I and my companion. No—none of these young ladies,” pursued Mrs. Brazier, seeing Adeline glance around; “mine is a beau.” She pointed, as she spoke, to Mr. Eustace, who was planted with his back against the door, and who smiled upon the elegant Mrs. Brazier, as her eyes were directed towards him.

There was something curious in the behaviour of Mr. Eustace; he kept apart from

the rest of the company, yet he was travelling with a very common-place, not to say vulgar, woman, whom even Mr. and Mrs. Meadows had admitted as a condescension to their house. Adeline was again startled by an undefinable likeness to Stanhope Floyer. Mr. Eustace was some two or three years younger—some few inches or so taller; but still they were alike. She turned to Mrs. Brazier.

“Who is Mr. Eustace?”

“He’s a-a—young gentleman, my dear. He’s going to Oxford to take his degree, and wants me to go along with him,—that’s all.” A sudden wink with both eyes accompanied this speech.

“You may well be surprised, my dear—I am not a learned doctor, am I?—as poor Mr. Brazier used to say to me many’s the day—‘Patty Brazier, thou’rt no scholar.’—However, not to confuse ye, I go only as far as Shipstow with my—with Mr. Eustace.”

Adeline’s curiosity was amply satisfied; she took, however, another glance at Mr. Eustace. This time, she thought he still more resembled Stanhope Floyer; and she could not withdraw her gaze. The young man on whom

her eyes, lit with a sudden expression, were riveted, even blushed under her scrutiny.

“It is, perhaps,” said Adeline to herself, “that all men of a particular stamp have some general attributes of resemblance. That quiet deportment—that unobtrusive self-possession. Ah! there is something in being a gentleman, quite unspeakable! Why did I ever know *him*, only to draw painful contrasts between those whom I must know now, and always!”

Her reverie was interrupted by the party moving away to supper. Adeline found her arm deposited on that of Mrs. Brazier, before she knew that she was destined to remain during the long repast with which the Wolstone routs were always concluded. The purgatory to which gentility had condemned the party was now ended. Merry voices, singing, flirting, chattering, were heard on the stairs. Spirits long pent up were let loose. The whist-players were making merry over a revoke; beaux became facetious; belles gracious. Among the rest, Miss Williams' voice was heard in high merriment, as she was squeezed into a place by Mr. Gadsden. That besieged, but unsubdued hero, looked ashamed of his

position; for many were the jokes passed at his expense by a knot of young Wolstone attorneys, who stood up behind the ladies.

“So, Mr. Gadsden, you’re in.”—“Hope you are happy, Gadsden?—fortunate man!”

“For shame!” cried Miss Williams, shaking her fan at the offenders, and colouring as she spoke. “Adeline,” she added in a loud whisper, “what would Sir Tufton say if he were here? My dear child, you are as pale as death!—or is it the contrast?” looking at the deep red face of Mrs. Brazier.

There was a sudden bustle almost immediately afterwards. Miss Meadows was hurried out of the room, Mrs. Brazier taking her under her arm. Miss Williams sprang up from her seat, forgetting even Mr. Gadsden, for her heart was true to her friend. The gentlemen made room for her, and she followed Adeline into the passage. There was nothing in the passage, except a sedan chair and the young stranger, Mr. Eustace, who had his foot on the stairs ready to follow Mrs. Brazier and Miss Meadows. He drew back for Miss Williams to pass.

“Is Miss Meadows gone up stairs?” asked

Louisa, gracefully bending; "pardon the seeming impropriety of my speaking to an utter stranger."

"Miss—Miss Meadows, did you say: is that her name?" said Mr. Eustace, quickly. "I am afraid she is very unwell. Can I do anything?—may I go up with you?"

He sprang after Miss Williams as he spoke. They entered the now deserted drawing-room. Adeline was near a window, sobbing almost convulsively.

"You may depend upon my information," Mrs. Brazier was saying; but she stopped short, and added,— "Mum— not a word!" when she saw Miss Williams standing near them.

Mr. Eustace had retired to the other end of the room; but, after a time, he came forward gracefully, though with the diffidence of a very young man, and said, "Can I be of use? Shall I order your carriage?" addressing Louisa.

"Ay, do, my dear," returned Mrs. Brazier, familiarly. "'Tis best for all of us to be going homewards—that have to go home. I'll

just go and take a mouthful of ham downstairs meantime, and finish my glass of wine."

The two friends were left together.

"This is most mysterious," said Miss Williams. "Dear Adeline, you are close—very close, to keep things so from me, dearest. What *is* the matter?—But see,—Mr. Eustace, how attentive!—Thank you, sir!—And, Adeline, dear, do you not feel equal to take a sandwich, or anything? Very well.—I can make any sacrifice for a friend;—but to leave such a party as this!"

She was interrupted by the silent offer of Mr. Eustace's arm. Adeline had accepted the other: and in a few moments they found themselves on the Northington road, Loftus being left to follow on horseback.

CHAPTER VII.

“ To one who has been long in city heat,
’Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of Heaven, to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.”

KEATS.

MRS. BRAZIER, who seemed to know everybody everywhere, had given poor Adeline the

much he had talked, what hints he had given that he should like to shew Miss Meadows and herself Tufton Court, a secret satisfaction was diffused over the solicitor's mind. Some hasty and slighting expressions thrown out by Stanhope Floyer arose to his remembrance. We always forget, when reckoning the misdeeds of others, those provocations which call forth the evil passions of an antagonist. Mr. Meadows remembered not his own cold and cutting sneers, when addressed by the desperate young man about his daughter; he was parentally blind to the offensive impertinence of Loftus's forward manners. He recollected nothing but a vehement assertion of Mr. Floyer's, that he would never again degrade himself by seeking to marry the daughter of a low-born attorney; and his pride — for pride is not confined to aristocracy — turned a kindly nature into one both bitter and vindictive.

It was, therefore, with complacency that Mr. Meadows surmised that his accomplished daughter might, by a marriage far more advantageous than that which he had broken off, prove to Mr. Floyer that the attorney's daughter was not to be despised. Sir Tufton,

indeed, bore the character of being the proudest man in the county. His unremitting attentions to Mr. Meadows' family were, therefore, the more pleasing. Mr. Meadows began to doubt whether the common opinion of Sir Tufton's pride were true. Weak man! Common opinions of character are always true. It is a mass of atoms which make it up; atoms collected by different persons, and brought into correspondence by force of their own veracity. But Sir Tufton had a motive to disguise his pride; he wanted money, and he was fascinated with beauty.

Adeline was now so habitually dejected, and made so little exertion to rally from her heartfelt sorrow, that had not Mr. Meadows been buoyed up with hopes of her future destiny, he would have suffered great uneasiness on her account. Amidst all her melancholy, Adeline read plainly the character of Sir Tufton, and saw his motives. She knew that he, and all of *his* stamp, regard the class below them as beings made for some good purpose, but not for the exalted destiny of association with themselves. Since Stanhope Floyer had spoken with contempt of the station and origin of her

family, Adeline felt but little concern about what Sir Tufton might think; but she shrank from a close collision with those who "flattered with their lips," and in their hearts said "tush, tush." She began to revolt from that easy condescension which, as she knew, in many cases covered an infinity of contempt.

It was long since Adeline had paid a visit to Lady Theodora Floyer. Yet Lady Theodora was one to whom, even in the bitterness of her mortification, her affections were still constant. Too young to perceive, on her first acquaintance with her godmother, that line of demarcation which ever will exist in this country between high and low, new and old, but of which the intellectual qualities of the present aristocracy have softened the odium, Adeline loved Lady Theodora rather from association than from reason. Seldom had she ascended to the Hill House without a bounding step and glowing cheek. Lady Theodora had of late been absent, but had returned; and after repeated messages sent through her maid, Adeline set out one morning to call upon her ladyship.

The way up the hill led into a secluded

and rural part of the village. A small farmhouse to the right, with a row of milk-pails near its gable end, stood in a meadow over which goslings were waddling, and in which the farmer's high-shouldered horse was feeding. A flaring garden, the very flowers touching the roof of the low-browed tenement, interspersed with its noisy hives, stretched down to the road. On the other side, acacias in flower, fine larches, spruce firs, planes, and sycamores, denoted that the paling above which they gracefully rose skirted the residence of greatness. It was, in fact, the belt of Tufton Court on the Northington side. In a few steps Adeline passed the village alehouse. Signs are now vanishing from our land, and with them many vestiges of old customs, and traces of family history must needs disappear. Northington had still, however, its "Ladder and Castle"—the castle like that on a chess-board—and the venerable picture hung across the road in gibbet form. The alehouse was one of those low, lengthened houses, with a bench in front, huge stables, and a horse-block, at which one may fancy Sancho and Don Quixote stopping to refresh their

steeds, whilst muleteers sat on the benches in front. In short, the old Posada which Cervantes so knowingly describes, has many a prototype still left in England.

The pleasant breeze blew unheeded by Adeline, as she thoughtfully gazed at the straggling branches of two elms, noted for size and beauty, by the aspect of which she knew that she approached Lady Theodora's cottage. A fair acacia spread its light foliage over the tarred palings which guarded Lady Theodora's territory. In a few moments Adeline rang the well-known bell, whose very sound recalled many cherished ideas; and she was admitted into the grounds.

Hill-house, or rather cottage, stood half-way up the hill, the summit of which bounded its circumscribed prospect. The cottage was situated before a grassy dell, formerly a large pond, but now partially filled up, and laid out in parterres. A gravel-walk ran round this dell, and was lost amid some thick trees, with an underwood of laurels with their varnished leaves, and of roses. The place looked much larger than it really was; yet was it large enough to comprise many beau-

ties;—to the florist some luxuries. The extremity of the dell, beyond a little mound whereon the lilies of the valley grew in profusion, was rendered a picture by the massy foliage of the chestnut and sycamore; whilst, on its slope, spreading above a rude low seat, rose one of those stately elms which England alone can boast. On the other side of the lawn, nearer the entrance, stood another, which almost touched the latticed windows of Hill-Cottage. Beyond the lawn, an undulating meadow, the boundary of which could not readily be observed, graced with here and there a stately chestnut, gave a park-like character to the simple scene.

The cottage was spacious, though low; it was white, irregular. A large bay window to the south gave the inmates the soft pleasure of looking upon an octagon bed of fine geraniums, encircled with a low edge, or border, of monthly and creeping roses. A large parterre in the centre of the lawn, blushing with the varied hues of common perennial flowers, and of some annuals, now obsolete, formed the main feature of the dell; whilst on the opposite bank grew a lilac, on the top

of which flakes of flowers, like drifted snow, waved in the spring-time. It was not that the scene was one of striking beauty; yet it had its picturesque charms. It was not ornate, but neat; and the grassy dell, blooming borders, dense wood, and waving upland with its spiral trees, formed indeed a pleasant spot, more suited to the reflective than to the joyous man, and better adapted to the slow pace of *Il Penseroso* than to the bounding step of *L'Allègro*.

There was a rustic arbour, too, and its thatched roof was clothed with straggling branches of the Ayrshire rose, emblem of its country, hardy and persevering; and, embosomed in ash and willow trees, lay a fishpond, still and deep; these were the few adjuncts to the place without; and as Adeline, with a beating heart, approached the ivy porch which formed the entrance to the cottage, there was another. A large Newfoundland dog, such an one as Landseer has delighted to pourtray, lay, chained to a seat upon the lawn, basking in the sunny spot, his white and feathery tail compressed between his legs; his broad head hidden between his

shoulders. The noble animal roused himself at the approach of footsteps; but it was to lick the hand extended to him, and to look kindly up at her whose image was pictured in his accurate memory. "The instability of human friendship is," says Johnson, "one amid many proofs of our sublunary state." Dogs, at least, are free from the charge of change or forgetfulness! Rare beings! constant, whilst all around is uncertain and unfaithful.

Adeline was aroused from her momentary reverie, by a lady walking up to her from a remote corner of the grounds, in a bustling, fidgety manner, as if out of temper with somebody, or even with the whole world.

"I have been expecting you all the morning, and you really keep me quite unsettled. I should have gone off to Dilkham if you had not said you were coming."

Thus spoke Lady Theodora Floyer, with much impatience; but she added, in a milder tone, "well, come in—how are you? really *quite* well."

There was an earnest affection in the manner of the question thus put, which redeemed

the irritability of the first address. Lady Theodora was a middle-aged woman, on whose plain face traces of that most melancholy affliction, a worrying temper, were visible. Her figure was short and awkward; her dress, though neat, dowdy. There was nothing engaging about her appearance, except an intelligent pair of dark eyes, which flashed beneath a low, contracted brow. She was one of those to whom an unpropitious fate runs counter all the days of their troublesome existence. There are such people scattered among society: naturally sanguine and energetic, everything that Lady Theodora had done had been unfortunate. Without fortune, she had early in life married a man older than herself. He had proved selfish and ill-tempered; *he* was wretched, and what was more, had died, making an unfair will. He left to Lady Theodora a small annuity, settling his vast property upon his only son, whom he entrusted to the care of guardians, to whom he left the charge of his son's education, and of his worldly concerns. Lady Theodora, who had been miserable whilst Mr. Floyer lived, was at his death ten times more unhappy.

By prudence and self-restraint she might have conciliated the guardians, who would gladly have devolved on her the care of her infant. She distrusted, she misunderstood, she abused them; she wrote them long letters, and two men of totally opposite characters were equally affronted with her. The course of business, and the security of their lives, was disturbed by Lady Theodora's voluminous letters and aggravating expressions. The guardians were rich, haughty men, who had scarcely known contradiction, nor heard the voice of censure or suspicion. They could not brook Lady Theodora's conduct; and they removed her only son wholly from her *surveillance*, placed him at a remote residence, and intimated to Lady Theodora that never, until he was of age, should her son see her, nor correspond with his only parent.

The child was but six years of age, and the blow was severe. For awhile, Lady Theodora madly, (with a mother's madness,) resisted this decision. She wrote, she traveled, she talked. But the law is strong. Her departed tyrant's will was guarded with all the technicalities which could fence it

from invasion. Lady Theodora's vehemence exasperated her enemies; after some guarded and well-devised replies, they took to silence, and no woman can stand that. At one time Lady Theodora was inclined to make her wrongs known through the medium of the press. She was advised not to do so, and she quarreled with the friend who so advised her. At last, wearied and desponding, she sank into a state of melancholy and bodily weakness, which formed an affecting contrast with her former excitement.

The explanation of all these sorrows might be found in Lady Theodora's character. Warm-hearted and generous, without a shade of disingenuousness, with only that sort of selfishness which makes us, when in anger, disregard the feelings of others, Lady Theodora had no discretion. Romantic, both on paper and in discourse, naturally eloquent, she required, in all the common concerns of life, almost as much guiding as a child; but then she would not be guided. She was vain of her epistolary powers, and therefore always wrote more than was wise or expedient. Captious, yet confiding, by far too ardent and

sudden in her friendships, and equally precipitate in breaking them off, her natural warmth of character had not, unhappily, that safety-valve to let it off without damage, which the care of a large family sometimes affords to women. For years she had lived a prey to her own feelings; the sport of an imagination nurtured by retirement; the object of respect, yet of dread to her acquaintance, who never felt secure against some out-break. Safe only amid her flowers, from which no reply could be extracted, with many accomplishments, a cultivated intellect, an excellent heart, Lady Theodora lived secluded, and was becoming a very eccentric old woman.

“I thought it odd,” said she to Adeline, as she led her young friend into the drawing-room of the cottage, “to hear of your going about everywhere with Miss Williams, and not coming to see me. But never mind — don’t look so disconsolate. How is Mr. Meadows? Is Stanhope Floyer at the Grange now?”

Adeline, sick at heart, replied, “that he was not, — but had been gone abroad some time.”

“Abroad? He never wrote to me to say

so. I shall write to him. And is all settled between you and him? When is the wedding to take place? I shall be hurt if you settle anything without consulting me. You will be a very proud, happy girl, Adeline — for the name of Floyer is not a common nor recent one to bear. At the same time, I consider Stanhope very fortunate also.”

This was too much for Adeline, and she hastened to tell her story, and to perform the difficult task of dealing between two persons whom she tenderly loved, without throwing blame upon either.

Lady Theodora's first impulse was extreme resentment against Mr. Meadows. Although she had quarreled with every member of her husband's family, except Stanhope, she was extremely tenacious about them, — and vexed and irritated when any one attempted to lower their consequence. But, possessing true principle, she quickly relented, and endeavoured to reconcile Adeline to her father's decree.

“ Depend upon it, Mr. Meadows must have good reason for what he has done,” she observed. “ I have no great opinion of Stanhope Floyer's steadiness, I can assure you.

I shall write to him, however, and tell him how disconsolate you are. But if it should so happen that he is willing to give you up, you must reconcile yourself to it, and consider that you have had a fortunate escape."

Adeline, like all other persons in such circumstances, felt how impossible it was to take to such a conviction at all. She dried up the tears which her narrative had called forth, and tried to render her visit cheerful to one who, as she well knew, had but few friends who did not plague her heart out.

"I was quite low before you came, but really this has roused me," said Lady Theodora. "This is my poor boy's birthday. He is twenty; and I have written a copy of verses to him."

"And will Mr. Floyer ever see them?"

"Oh, yes! I have means of letting him have them; though I don't know whether he will take the trouble to read them: they tell me he is not fond of poetry."

Tears started into Lady Theodora's dark eyes as she spoke. "It is not my fate, Adeline, ever to know a congenial spirit. No,—not even in my son. I can say with Madame

de Staël — ‘*Jamais je n’ai etée aimée autant que je puisse aimer.*’ But let us not dwell upon painful subjects. See how wrong it is in such a sweet, peaceful scene, to harbour care. Look at the meadows now, Adeline! there is a gleam of sunshine just across the hill; and that flock of sheep just entering, what animation they give to the scene. Let us lift up our hearts, Adeline, with gratitude to Him who makes this world a pleasant world: His creatures alone deface it by their bad passions.”

Nobody could speak better than Lady Theodora on such subjects. Her piety was exalted, rational, heartfelt. She had kept within the bounds between fanaticism and coldness. She had warmth without superstition; yet, such wonderful creatures are we, even piety so genuine could not correct her hasty and often erring temper.

Adeline soon found Lady Theodora much better than when she arrived: the miseries of others occupied her active mind. Resolved to write, to act, to expostulate, until she brought together those whom parental decree sought to separate; to write a lecture to Stanhope

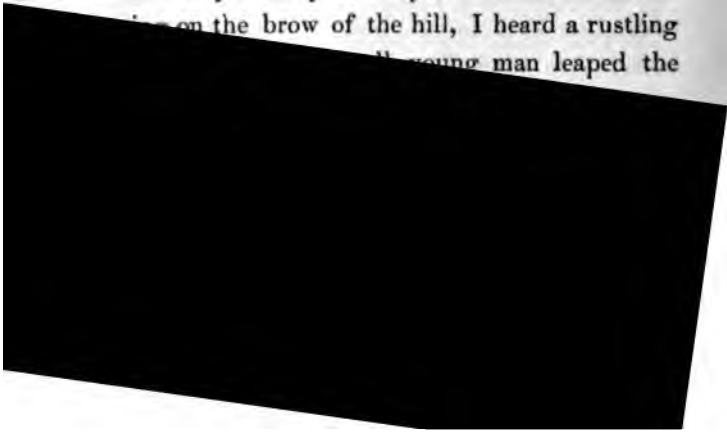
Floyer, a remonstrance full of pathos to Mr. Meadows, were schemes which drew Lady Theodora from her melancholy reveries, and made her happy for the evening.

She said nothing of her intention to Adeline, but quickly turning the conversation, again reverted to her son.

“They tell me he is handsome, still like that,” pointing to the portrait of a dark-haired boy, with a long sash and whip; “and I hear that he is distinguishing himself at Baliol, and gaining golden opinions. Mr. Sidney has chosen a profession for him,—the Bar; though I confess the army would have been my choice.”

Well was it for Lady Theodora’s son, that wiser heads than hers regulated the destiny of the young man.

“—But it is his vacation now. I had a vision of him yesterday. Fancy, Adeline, while walking on the brow of the hill, I heard a rustling
the young man leaped the



down the dell, I lost sight of him. Is it not miserable to say, I should not know my son?"

Adeline, who knew Lady Theodora's romantic turn of mind, endeavoured to persuade her that the stranger might be a mere traveller; that her son would never have been near her, without endeavouring to see and converse with her. But the shadows across the lawn now became longer. The flowers had closed their petals; and Adeline, warned of the approach of evening, took leave, and prepared to walk homewards.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Economy ’s a very useful broom,
Yet should not ceaseless hunt about the room,
To catch each straggling pin to make a plumb.

Proper economy ’s a comely thing,
Good in a subject, better in a King ;
Yet push’d too far, it dulls each finer feeling,
Most easily inclin’d to make men mean.”

WOLCOT.

ADELINE was met by Miss Williams, who, with a gloomy expression upon her face, held out a letter in her hand.

“ Only think ! Mrs. Middleton has given me my *cong e*. Now fancy being dismissed by her because Miss Patty’s grammar is not approved, Miss Emmy’s ciphering does not seem to her papa ‘ come on ’ since Miss Dukes left. I may suit myself when convenient ; and Mrs. Middleton will send my trunks by the Northington carrier when I choose to appoint.

Now, do look, dear girl;—what stops, what a hand-writing, what folding, what wax, what paper! Well, it will be a long time before Mrs. Middleton will get any one to suit *her*.”

“Never mind, dear Louisa,” said Adeline, kindly; “stay with us; it is a great comfort, and —”

She hesitated; for certain ideas had lately been floating in her mind, which caused her sometimes to doubt the nature and extent of the comfort.

“Dear, kind, sweet Adeline! I will stay, then, as you wish it so much. I will do anything to oblige you, though I could go to Mrs. Smallwood’s at any time. She would be enchanted to have me; and as to Mr. Smallwood, he would wish me to live there, I know. Mrs. Middleton has behaved exceedingly unhand-some, and all Wolstone will take my part. Here comes Mr. Gadsden; I am sure he will feel for me; he’s such a kind-hearted man.”

Mr. Gadsden was picking his way, with a remarkably well-brushed pair of shoes, and he only passed the ladies with a respectful bow.

“There! I suppose the Northington people have been saying something about me!” cried

Louisa. "I will say it in confidence to you, Adeline, that Mr. Gadsden has, since I came here, done his best to engage my affections, and that he has, to a certain extent, succeeded."

"Has he, indeed?" said Adeline, surprised; for another notion had taken possession of her mind.

"Those who have known what suspense is, disappointment, ill-conduct," pursued Miss Williams, "will say that Mr. Gadsden has acted a very wrong part, if he now draws back."—She looked back as she spoke.—"But see, absolutely he is going into the Haines's to tea, where he declared to me that he never visited."

"Oh, I dare say," answered Adeline; "it is only now and then that he goes there. Here is my father."

Mr. Meadows, in a spenser, now alighted from a gig, driven by Loftus, who hauled out a large blue bag afterwards.

"Mr. Stanhope Floyer's title-deeds," whispered Loftus to Miss Williams. "My father has a pretty strong feeling in this. The Grange is to be sold next week."

Adeline turned pale; but Loftus was not

the person to whom she could disclose her emotions. His heartless conduct excited her resentment; and the brother and sister, in childhood so united, had long since become estranged from each other. Adeline walked into Mr. Meadows' study: she found him seated in his arm-chair, giving Louisa an account of his reception at the Wolstone Quarter Sessions; what county gentlemen had spoken to him; what compliments barristers had paid him.

Poor Mr. Meadows! his weakness was that undue love of what we call respectability, a foible which is sometimes unaccompanied by the display of vanity. He stopped when his daughter came in; for her discriminative affection did not lead him on to the committal of absurdities, like the seductive sympathy of Miss Williams.

“— And this business of Stanhope Floyer's has done me no harm. Every one approves of my dismissal of him from my house,” resumed Mr. Meadows, after a pause.

Adeline felt cut to the soul, that her father should thus unnecessarily wound her feelings. It looked, too, as if some conversation had

been before held with Louisa upon the subject ; and as if her friend and her father agreed together on this point.

“ Are we never to have tea, love ? ” said Mr. Meadows, with a little impatience, startling Adeline from her reverie by the abruptness of his manner.

“ My father is almost unkind to me, ” thought Adeline ; but she had studied the male character too well to remonstrate with an irritated person, and she withdrew mournfully, but in silence, to the drawing-room.

Miss Williams now took up her abode at the Grove, Northington. Her boxes arrived by the carrier from Wolstone ; and, as she was a lady of a voluminous wardrobe, a whole day was occupied in unpacking. Sally, the fat old housemaid, who had been some twenty years in the family, remarked to her fellow-servants that Miss Williams was making herself quite at home. First, she had asked for an additional chest of drawers ; there was a spare chest in Sally’s room, and she had been obliged to turn out some hoards ; her best gown wrapped up in a cotton handkerchief, and other matters.

Nothing offends a servant so much as being

dislodged from a chest of drawers, or parting with any of those domestic articles, the property of their master, to which they give the designation "my." They perfectly understand nine points of the law. Next, Miss Williams requested a better looking-glass, "as she was going to stay;" that in her room made her face look broad. "Miss Adeline don't never complain of her face looking broad," said Sally, as she thrust a fresh looking-glass on Miss Williams' toilet. Then Miss Williams requested that she might have some sort of a cheffonier to write on, and contain her papers—her correspondence with a hundred dear friends.

A little intrigue upon this point went on with the heads of the family unknown to Sally, for lo! one morning, she was summarily ordered by Mr. Meadows to lift out of his dressing-room a bureau which had belonged to the late Mrs. Meadows. That precise but mild lady had settled all her housekeeping accounts upon the lid, which folded back, and discovered many little drawers; an inkstand at one corner, and a bunch of lavender at the other. The very ink which Mrs. Meadows had used was scarcely dry, as Sally, when ordered to dust

the bureau, observed. It was almost past the old servant's forbearance to move this venerated article into Miss Williams' room, and see her begin to put her trinkets and letters in the drawers.

“ And I say, Sally, isn't there a little stool, just the right height that suits the bureau? fetch it, then; and I say, Sally, I must have my warm water more punctual. Mr. Meadows says you're all too late; bring it me by half past seven, unless I ring before; and when I do ring, answer the bell directly; nothing annoys me so much as the bell not being answered directly.”

“ As long as you stays, Miss, you shall have your bell answered,” replied Sally, with a dark glance.

Miss Williams now domesticated herself completely. As far as her habits were concerned, she was an excellent inmate, and that is saying much. She was always down to put in the coffee, Adeline often too late. She had many home-bred accomplishments, mended pens well, sewed on buttons remarkably well, never left a room untidy, and had, in short, many of those good thrifty ways to which men of

Mr. Meadows' stamp attach importance. Then, as to the art of managing character, she resembled, in a miniature sphere, that Duchess of Ursini, whom St. Simon so well describes, and who had influence without anyone knowing how to account for it. Loftus, who could not bear opposition, stood rallying from her. Mr. Meadows would forego his afternoon sleep at her bidding. Adeline was the only person over whom her influence was not unbounded. Day by day she saw her rights, as Mr. Meadows' daughter, invaded, and some wonted privilege, as mistress of the house, wrested from her, without defining to herself the source. Miss Williams, under pretence of zeal, interfered in everything. True, it was always "dear Adeline," but then she invariably sided with Mr. Meadows.

That gentleman's sentiments to Mr. Stanhope Floyer had assumed the bitterness of personal dislike. He could not forgive his daughter for the deep though silent grief which he read in her expressive countenance. The late Mrs. Meadows, though a precise person, and taking her own way in all small matters, had looked up to Mr. Meadows, as

wives did of old, as oracular on "points of opinion." It is astonishing how degenerate modern matrons are in this respect; they absolutely think for themselves. It had been always, "Mr. Meadows says so," "I will ask Mr. Meadows," "If Mr. Meadows permits me, I shall be very happy," "I am sure I don't know; Mr. Meadows can tell you." Now this state of things, though very good for wives, was not salutary for husbands. They conceived so high an opinion of themselves, that I can remember invariably being frightened at the master of a house, as an arbitrary sort of creature, who used to stand with his back to the fire, and lay down the law. Mr. Meadows, though a good man and a good husband, had been considerably spoiled by his wife, and a sort of impatience possessed him when he found that though wives were spaniels, daughters were not. He took to the amiable process of talking at his daughter.

"To-morrow is the sale at the Grange," he said one day at dinner, "and that thoughtless boy will be rooted out from the county."

Miss Williams glanced at Adeline.

"I fancy, the property, including the fur-

niture, will fetch sixty thousand pounds, for Jew discounters are come down to take *their* share. A horse-dealer at Wolstone has some thousands, and I believe the law-expenses of our office will swallow up the rest."

"Then *his* pride will be tolerably lowered," observed Loftus scornfully.

The features of this young man were formed for contempt, and an expression of contempt, without intellectual power. His mouth turned down at the corners; his hooked nose was wrinkled up in derision; he was, in truth, mightily disagreeable.

"Every sort of insult," pursued Mr. Meadows, still addressing Miss Williams, "which Mr. Floyer's solicitor could cast at *us*, without being liable to an action, has been cast. I hope I am not uncharitable in supposing his principal to be at the bottom of it."

Miss Williams shook her head, hoping that Adeline did not see the shake. She was right, for the poor girl sat with downcast glances, in a mood between sorrow and anger. For once, the distress of one still deeply in love gave place to the wounded feelings of a daughter.

She thought of Lady Theodora as a refuge

and *confidante*, but shrank, as persons of delicate mind will shrink, from the thoughts of making a stranger intermeddle in family troubles. Besides, she could not trust to the existence of that valuable property on which, more than on all that can delight and dazzle, we lean, when in difficulties,—the discretion of a friend.

For a few days she was racked with every particular of the sale at Woodcote Grange. That property was the only estate of which Mr. Floyer could dispose. Dinner-time was a period of agony to her. Mr. Meadows had the decency to keep away from the Grange, but Loftus, like a harpy awaiting its prey, looked on day after day, whilst every treasured article of utility, vertu, the relics of old ancestry, the gifts of kindred, were displayed beneath the auctioneer's hammer. Mr. Meadows had a mortgage of ten thousand pounds on the property, the interest of which had not been paid for some years. Whilst Stanhope Floyer was the permitted lover of Adeline, Mr. Meadows, though an exact man, was reconciled to allow this irregularity; but since the engagement had been broken off, there was nothing revolt-

ing to his standard of morals in taking his own. The estate was sold, by private contract, to the guardians of Mr. Floyer, the cousin of Stanhope; but as there was a heavy debt, it was gratifying to find that the personalities went off so well, and that the creditors were likely to be paid in full.

“The stud was sold to-day,” was Loftus’s intelligence at the second day’s sale; “the horses went really for nothing; but that is of no consequence, since I guess there is already enough to set *us* straight, sir.”

“Adeline, take some wine, dear,” said Miss Williams, who really had good-nature, and was struck by the despondency of her ill-fated friend.

Adeline took the glass in her hand, tried to taste the wine; the effort was too great. The kind accents touched her feelings; she burst into tears.

“This before the servants!” exclaimed Mr. Meadows, looking round; but he was gratified to observe that the tears were instantaneously dried up, and calm restored. Still he felt the dejection of Adeline as a reproach to himself.

“The old family coach came next,” pursued

the stupid Loftus, "and went for an old song.—Mr. Floyer pretends to be vexed at this, for he affects to value what belonged to his father when he was High Sheriff. Then he has ordered the family arms to be scraped out."

"Mr. Floyer—is he in this part of the country?" asked Louisa.

"Yes, he is staying with some one; I don't know whom. Some one who is obliging enough to take him in. People are infatuated with the fellow. I heard from Haines to-day that his cousin, Eustace Floyer, would have bought the estate, only to present it to his cousin, if he had himself been of age, but he is not."

The next day, Loftus came home in high spirits:—the library had been sold, and so were Mr. Floyer's dogs;—the sale was over. It was done! the venerable mansion was dismantled; waggons were even conveying away the spoil. There was no end of fine pictures carried out; for Mr. Eustace Floyer's guardians would have nothing to do with the furniture, though they had resolved to purchase the estate; their conduct was somewhat enigmatical."

Mr. Meadows was silent and thoughtful.

All that an exasperated man could wish of humiliation to his foe, was accomplished; Mr. Stanhope Floyer had now no footing in the county; he could never come there again to remind Mr. Meadows a second time that he was only "a low-born attorney"; he could not lower the respectability of Mr. Meadows' family by allying his ruined fortunes to theirs. All Mr. Meadows wished was, to have done with the man for ever; to get his mortgage back; and to forget that ever such a person had troubled him.

During the following week he had to ride over to Woodcote to receive his share of the spoil, which was to be adjusted to the different claimants by Mr. Floyer's solicitor.

The Grange was distant about two miles from Northington. The road lay along a sandy lane, until it reached the greensward of a hilly ascent, whereon the tenement of humble name was seated. How it had acquired that appellation it was difficult to say, for there was a manorial character in the edifice. Mr. Meadows approached the park by an expansive common, or chace, striking from which into a lane, and passing Woodcote

Hatch, a small cluster of houses on a green, the lodge came into view. An old woman, with a sullen face, walked out reluctantly to open the gate; for she was an ancient denizen on the property, and looked with an evil eye upon those who drove her young master away.

Mr. Meadows rode attended by a servant; a piece of grandeur unwonted in him, and for which he had accounted to Miss Williams by saying that the day was showery, and that Jim should carry his great coat; but perhaps the recollection of those words, "low-born attorney," had something to do with the arrangement.

The road across the park was shaded by trees irregularly planted, not in any avenue; so that a visitant to Woodcote was quite unprepared, on arriving at a dense laurel hedge and opening a slender iron gate, to present himself before a massive red brick house, with a clock-tower in the centre, and zigzag chimneys on its extensive roof, and to find himself opposite to a stately avenue of great antiquity, which had formerly been an approach on the opposite side of the park. A flat lawn,

adorned by recent skill with parterres of flowers, extended on the other side of the building, round which ran an open cloister of great beauty; the lawn reached to a high garden-wall on the one side, to a sunk fence on the other; then dark woods closed the prospect.

Mr. Meadows, leaving his horse to his servant, walked up to a porch in the centre of the clock-tower; the door was open, and in a few minutes he stood within the hall. This was much in the same state as usual, for the work of demolition had only begun in the upper rooms. Flowers on stands, as yet stood in the bay-windows, and family portraits hung still on the walls. All was paneled with oak, so that those vestiges of carelessness which are often to be lamented in removing goods were not observable. Mr. Meadows remained for a moment gazing at two huge fire dogs, which were on either side of the ample chimney, and thought it was a pity they should have gone for nothing. But he was not a man to mourn after useless antiquities; and he *was* just such a man as to fill up the fire-place with a bright Wolstone grate, had he lived in these days.

Mr. Meadows passed into the drawing-room. This was a low but very spacious apartment, running directly across that wing of the house, with a large latticed window at each end. The jessamine and China rose fringed the window-frames with their blossoms; and on an angle of the house the bright autumnal leaves of the Virginian creeper cast a glow upon the curtains of the room; a gleam of sunshine fell athwart the silent apartment. This was as yet undisturbed; and portraits, denoting that the inhabitants of Woodcote Grange had once been cavaliers, still hung upon the walls. There the soft eyes of that child of misfortune, Elizabeth, the ill-fated daughter of Charles I. were depicted by the art of Velasquez. A degree of melancholy pervaded her youthful countenance; and her long ringlets hung over a serious, though childish face. Mr. Meadows looked up, for a few moments, at the matchless picture, and wondered "what that had fetched." The furniture, he remarked, was in good preservation;—but there was none of it, he wisely decided, that would suit the square, blue, cold drawing-room of the Grove. The chairs

of this drawing-room were ebony, with cushions of scarlet cloth; contrasting well with the very dark oak of the panelled walls. Rich cabinets, and rare vases, were scattered about. "There must be many hundreds worth even here," thought Mr. Meadows. He was startled, while in contemplation of a King Charles, by a servant telling him that the gentlemen were assembled.

Mr. Meadows was a short square man, with a business-like walk, a steady eye, a leathery, unvarying complexion. When engaged in professional concerns, he had the art of dismissing all private feelings whatsoever. He was merely the solicitor.

He entered a small sitting-room beyond the drawing-room, with as much composure as if he had never heard the name of Floyer. There was a little knot of gentlemen seated round the table. One of these was Mr. Floyer's attorney, with whom Mr. Meadows was on cool terms. A slight recognition, however, took place. There were three dark-complexioned gentlemen of that nameless profession to which Mephistopheles belonged; the craft of sending the unlucky headlong to perdition. There was

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the auctioneer who had sold Woodcote; there was a gentleman who represented Mr. Eustace Floyer; and there was the unfortunate Stanhope Floyer himself.

This young man had not lost his beauty with his fortune; he was surprisingly handsome, and the shade of embarrassment and seriousness on his countenance embellished him the more. Although Mr. Meadows had not the grace to bow on his entrance, he had; he partly rose from his seat, and then observing to his solicitor, that it would be as well to lose no time, the business of the day went on.

The sale of Woodcote House and Manor to the trustees of Mr. Eustace Floyer was then stated by Mr. Mose, the solicitor of Mr. Floyer, and the purchase-money specified; it was thirty-thousand pounds.

“Mr. Meadows,” added Mr. Mose, “you and these other gentlemen will prove your debts;—you are the chief creditor.”

Mr. Meadows drew near the table; at this instant his eyes met the gaze of Stanhope Floyer. Fearless and sarcastic was the glance. Mr. Meadows was unnerved for the instant; but business was business. His claims were

admitted, and a cheque was drawn out by Mr. Floyer for their release. The money-scriveners then put in their small items; rapidly did the newly-acquired sum melt away ere they were satisfied. Five-thousand pounds alone remained; "and upon that," observed Mr. Mose, with a sweet smile, "I must lay an embargo, for money lent and expended. The proceeds of your pictures, furniture, &c., Mr. Floyer, will be a nice little provision for pocket money — some four-thousand pounds, I believe."

It might have gratified a worse man than Mr. Meadows to observe the hand of his foe pass rapidly across his brow, and to see him start from his chair and run distracted from the room. Having bowed to the parties assembled, Mr. Meadows looked at his watch, found that it was time to be riding home, and retraced his steps through the hall.

Having business at a neighbouring village, Mr. Meadows returned through the avenue. The road which passed through it had been converted into a pleasant grass walk, at the end of which one came into the park. It was rather a liberty to take this way to quit the

park, and implied familiarity. Mr. Meadows rode in a very sober mood along the greenward, heedless of the confusing noises of a rookery, and never looking back. He had not advanced very far before he saw a man running through the woods, by a short cut from the house, to meet him. Thinking it was some clerk of Mr. Mose's, Mr. Meadows stopped his horse, and waited for the unknown. In a few minutes Mr. Stanhope Floyer presented himself before the lawyer.

“ You ride fast, Mr. Meadows, but I wished to ask you, how is your daughter ? ” These words were spoken with breathless haste. Then, fixing his eyes on the countenance of Meadows, the spendthrift added ; “ has she forgotten me ? No ! she will *never* forget me ! Indeed I will take care she does not, Mr. Meadows ! I *will* wed your daughter ! ” He spoke with passion, yet, ere Mr. Meadows could reply, he went on.—“ Pray be cool, pray be cool, Mr. Meadows ; — nothing injures a man of your credit so much as losing his temper — I recommend you to be cool — remember the last time ! ”

“ Mr. Floyer, ” replied Mr Meadows, writh-

ing on his seat, "I recommend you to desist. I can have *no* communication with you, sir." His voice rose to such a pitch that the woods almost echoed with the sound; but he lowered it in a few minutes to say, "I am perfectly cool, Mr. Floyer, perfectly, quite cool, quite so." His lips trembled and looked livid as he spoke.

"I send no message to your daughter, sir, for I shall see her myself," cried Mr Floyer, with a malicious glance; "ay, and often! For her sake, Mr. Meadows, I suffer you to pass on without what you deserve."

He gently raised a small cane in his hand, and in an instant was lost in the woods.

To describe the countenance of Mr. Meadows as he rode on, would require an abler pen than mine. Never had the dignity of his character received so great a shock. He felt, somehow that he had lost caste. The very threat, the sneer, the defiance, were enough. Of what avail was universal respect, the homage of brother attorneys, the deference of barristers, the confidence of clients, if it could be thus whistled away in a breath? His servant, too, whom, contrary to custom, he had taken after him, had witnessed the whole.

But there was one comfort, Jim was somniferous ; when not on the gallop, he usually dozed on horseback ; and Mr. Meadows, looking round, saw by the nodding head and half-closed eyes, that Jim had not been roused. Somewhat solaced, Mr. Meadows, swelling with rage, rode onwards to Northington.

To encounter his daughter in that state of mind would be painful, and Mr. Meadows found it a relief to hear that she was passing the evening with Lady Theodora Floyer. Miss Williams had not been invited. She was, therefore, ready to preside over the tea-table ; and everything was, by her care, so neatly arranged, that Mr. Meadows, on entering the blue drawing-room, felt as if the days of his late wife were come over again ; for although Adeline was affectionately attentive to all his wishes, there is nothing to man's selfishness so obsequious as a wife.

Miss Williams saw that something had happened, but she was too shrewd to make a direct inquiry. She began by driving at the subject, and playing into Mr. Meadows' thoughts, as it were. She did not obtain his confidence,

but she won his good-will by her sympathy, which seemed to be intuitive.

“How late Adeline is!” cried Miss Williams, as the evening closed in, and Mr. Meadows sat still in a reverie. “I can’t think what Adeline sees in that Lady Theodora! such a fright! not the least like a woman of quality.—Ah! if you could but see my dear, charming Lady Cameron, *there* is elegance indeed.”

“Lady Theodora is not graceful, certainly,” returned Mr. Meadows, in a hurried tone, and with some complacency.

“No! and then a woman who was separated from her husband! Though she does not think me good enough to invite, I don’t think her Ladyship quite good enough to visit, I can tell her. It would never do for a young female in my unprotected situation, to be visiting those who were separated.”

Mr. Meadows felt uneasy, for the thought whether he was doing right or not, in sanctioning an intimacy between Adeline and Lady Theodora for the first time crossed his mind. Lady Theodora had been a client, and he had never thought about her separation from her husband before.

“ I don't like those Floyers. There is something disreputable about the whole set,” pursued Miss Williams. “ By the way,—how did Mr. Stanhope Floyer's creditors fare to-day?”

Mr. Meadows simply replied that they were all satisfied, at which Miss Williams held up her hands.

“ I *am* astonished! for I expected some trick—some evasion. When do you take your brandy-and-water, sir? As Adeline is not here, I must be her substitute.”

Mr. Meadows thought her a very agreeable substitute; but, being a prudent man, he only thought so. He grew more loquacious over his brandy-and-water, and his mind reverted to former days, and to his late wife. It is astonishing how widowers like to talk of the departed to those whom they rather expect to be the next in succession.

His recollections related to Adeline: for the father's fondness was all awakened by the apprehensions for his child which Mr. Floyer's speech had aroused, and the indignities offered to himself were forgotten. Her very absence,

too, softened his feelings towards his unhappy, and, perhaps, ill-fated child.

“ I remember her being a tender-spirited little thing even from her cradle,” he remarked, after some observations had led to the theme. —“ Poor Mrs. Meadows,” — he looked up at the picture as he spoke, —“ was always obliged to call me in to Loftus ; but, with Adeline, a word was enough. God grant,” he added with much emphasis, “ that she may never have her spirit broken by unkindness. My wife had such an excellent method with her, — for Mrs. Meadows was a very sensible woman — a very sensible woman, indeed !”

“ She was, indeed, a most sensible woman,” echoed Louisa, with a faint show of enthusiasm.

“ Ah ! Mrs. Meadows could never have brought her mind to see Adeline throw away her affections on a prodigal. No one had more correct notions of her own than my dear Margaret had ; and if she *had* formed a wish for any union between her daughter and another, it was with the son of a second cousin of ours, — a most respectable surgeon and apothecary

at Macclesfield: his son is now in the concern, and they attend far and near, I hear. Old Borroughs has made money, and his son has learned to keep it, not to spend it."

"And what line can be more respectable than the medical?" cried Louisa zealously. "Is the young man still disengaged. But, hark! there is dear Adeline's ring."

"I have accounts to settle with Loftus in the office," cried Mr. Meadows, bustling off as fast as he could. "Good night, Miss Williams."

"What — what a roseate hue! Adeline, you have been rouging! — What a flushed cheek! — You have been weeping, then?"

"No, dear Louisa," exclaimed Adeline, with much excitement of manner. "No; I have been so happy, — *too* happy! I have seen him: he is not changed—no, still the same to me! He is sorry for all he said to papa, and I—I—"

"Why I am not supposed to know who *he* is; you have never confided in me, Adeline."

"I thought, Louisa, that you knew—you guessed—"

“ I guessed—what? That my poor child’s head was running on some one far away: that Sir Tufton had no chance; Mr. Gadsden no chance; that even the handsome Mr. Eustace was forgotten!—but I knew not *why*. Now tell me calmly, how, and when, and where this Mr. Stanhope Floyer proffered his vows. What is it? — ‘ Young Edward looked unuttered things, but never talked of love.’—But he did talk of love.”

“ Not,” said Adeline emphatically, “ until my father permitted his addresses. Why have my affections been thus trifled with? — why has his happiness? Mr. Stanhope Floyer is not new to the county; his embarrassments, his circumstances were all known to my father when first we met. But I forget myself;—my lot is a hard one; but never shall a syllable of reproach towards my only parent be spoken by me, whether he is present or absent.”

“ Then the engagement is quite given up?” inquired Louisa, after a pause.

“ It never will be resumed without my father’s free consent. We trust to the future. Oh! I am happy now! For I can bear sepa-

ration when I know that I am still the first, the only object of *his* attachment."

"I would not be too sure of that," thought Miss Williams. "Well, Adeline, dear, come into my room, and tell me when you first met, and where. Was he long before he fell in love?—and how did you find it out? Did you correspond? Does Lady Theodora know of it?" Thus interrogating her friend, Miss Williams drew from her the simple, heartfelt recital of that commonest of all tales,—a love-tale; and we will spare our readers the repetition.

CHAPTER IX.

"No fault in women, to refuse
The offer which they most would choose."

HERRICK.

"I CAN assure you, Mr. Meadows, it is not at all Mr. Stanhope Floyer's intention to linger here, or to annoy any one with his addresses to whom they are not agreeable. I hope he has a more proper pride. And by this time—this is Friday, I think—he is in the Channel. He has joined his cousin, Lord ——, in an excursion to Guernsey, and so on to the Continent."

"And the very best place for him, my lady," returned Mr. Meadows, to whom this speech was addressed by Lady Theodora Floyer.

There was something sarcastic in the tone of his voice which irritated Lady Theodora. She was walking with Mr. Meadows round

the grass-plot before the windows, and Miss Williams, leaning out from her bed-room, behind a poplar tree, could hear the argument, and noted that what is genteelly called excitement prevailed in the dispute.

“ I should suppose Stanhope Floyer need not be long a bachelor, if he chose. I detest that worldly, mercenary spirit, which looks only at what a man has in the funds, or to the value of his acres. I trust he will marry suitably to his condition in life.”

“ Lady Theodora is wrath,” thought Miss Williams. “ Mr. Meadows does not answer.”

“ But since you and I can never agree, and are constituted in *all* respects so very differently,” Lady Theodora began again, “ the less we talk on this subject the better. You have consented to spare Adeline for a month or two ?”

“ This is news !” thought Miss Williams as she stretched her neck to the utmost. “ Am I to turn out too ?”

“ On one condition, my Lady,” was Mr. Meadows’ reply, “ and I am certain that on your Ladyship’s part, a promise given, will be observed.”

“Remember, Mr. Meadows, my promise extends only to the period of two months. During that period I give you my assurance that Stanhope Floyer and your daughter shall not meet. At least, not with my knowledge. And whom have you here to supply her place? I think I saw a Miss Williams when I came in. A cheerful-looking person, one of that useful class between a friend and a housekeeper.”

“Indeed!” ejaculated Miss Williams.

“Does she stay with you? Ah! a very proper arrangement; for she is not so very young that you might be afraid of your son. Well, she will be a nice companion for your winter evenings. I dare say she sews well, too, and understands those feminine and gentle arts which contribute so much to the comfort of life. She does not look to me like a fine lady.”

“Does she not?” cried Louisa *sotto voce!*
“She may prove to be as rich an one as your poverty-stricken Ladyship, with your three hundred a year. But hark, they are coming this way again!”

Mr. Meadows was now speaking; there was something apologetic in his tone.

“It was always the late Mrs. Meadows’ wish that the house should not be left to servants, merely; for it was her opinion that the best of domestics will take liberties where they can.”

“Very true. But beware of elevating this young person above her proper sphere in your household, lest when Miss Meadows returns she may find her unwilling to give up the reins of government. I *have* known such things.” Lady Theodora sighed audibly, “and my married unhappiness was produced by the undue influence of an humble friend.”

Mr. Meadows made no reply; but Louisa, as she looked down upon him, thought, from the manner in which he wiped his forehead, that he was not pleased. Lady Theodora had a sort of missionary principle. It was her notion, that whether welcome or unwelcome, she must speak out her mind; and that she was destined to set all the world to rights. It is very strange that they who manage their own affairs the worst, have generally the conviction that they can manage those of other people.

Lady Theodora and Mr. Meadows turned into the house; and Louisa, closing her window and sitting down before the glass, revolved in her mind her future prospects.

“I must not appear eager for the charge” —she meditated—“like Richard III. it must be forced upon me. Ha! ha! so I am between a friend and a housekeeper! The old woman must be blind. Come in,” she called out, hearing a gentle tap at the door.

Adeline stepped softly in. Louisa was calmly reading, and Adeline “hoped she did not disturb her.”

“Oh, no! dear girl! only excuse me if I just finish this last page of Mrs. Hannah More —her ‘Christian Philosophy.’”

“I can wait—only, papa, whose time is more precious, wishes also to speak to you.”

“Mr. Meadows! What can he have to say? Is it any fresh letter from those Cranstouns, in Scotland, about taking their situation? Ah, me! somewhere in the oatmeal country, where people are obliged by law to drink a quart of porridge a day. Well, I must yield to destiny.”

“It is not that, Louisa,” replied Adeline,

timidly, "I was coming to ask you for such a very—very great favour."

"And what can my sweetest, dearest, injured Adeline ask," cried Miss Williams, clasping her arms round her friend's neck, "that *I* will not do, if it cost me all my large fortune — namely, 39*l.* 10*s.* in the Four per cent. Consols? — I knew I should make you laugh."

"Lady Theodora," said Adeline, "has invited me to pay a visit with her to her old friend Lady Wentworth. But I could not leave papa alone—there is no one whom he will so much like to be with him, as you. I may be gone two months—perhaps, three! Will you take my place here, dear Louisa? I know it is asking a very great favour—but"—

Miss Williams looked down, sighed, blushed.

"Why I must confess, Adeline, it is not a charge I should have chosen for myself," she replied after a pause, "that of superintending another person's house. I am not clever at accounts, and I hate ordering servants. But if you wish it, I will certainly remain till you return — you must put me into all your dear father's ways. Mr. Mea-

dows is not so young as he was, and old people are sometimes particular; and I declare I have taken so little notice, I do not know what he does like, and what he does not like. I have observed he does not like veal—that I *have* observed—and he never eats pickles. It will be a very arduous situation for me, dear Adeline.”

“Indeed, Louisa, I think you know papa’s habits and inclinations as well as I do, and that you will make him extremely comfortable. But will you see him, and give your consent to the plan? Papa is a formal man, and will not be satisfied unless you do.”

“Very well, then, I will follow you down stairs; perhaps I had better put on a cap; it will make me look a little older.”

“There is no occasion,” replied Adeline, with much simplicity, as she closed the door.

She hastened to her father to assure her of Miss Williams’ acquiescence; but she had scarcely finished her disclosure before Louisa herself appeared.

“I am truly gratified,” said Mr. Meadows, rising, “that Miss Williams has acceded to my request. It places me under a great

obligation to Miss Williams. My son, my servants, and myself will vie in showing you respect, and attention. Whatever privileges the late Mrs. Meadows enjoyed—I mean, whatever my daughter has been accustomed to, Miss Williams will fully possess.”

“ I shall be only too happy if I can be useful while dear Adeline enjoys herself. I never was a selfish character. Indeed I have been my own worst enemy ;” and Miss Williams sighed audibly, alluding to the hundred-and-one disappointments which she had encountered.

Mr. Meadows was not a man of romance; and he did not appreciate the sentimental moods of Miss Williams. But Adeline felt for her friend, who, as she well understood, might have been married over and over again, if it had not been for the perfidy and heartlessness of mankind.

Every arrangement of the exact household, even to the payment of the weekly bills, was then made by Mr. Meadows; and little was left to do, except to determine the mode of Adeline’s journey, and to pack up her dresses.

It was soon announced in Northington that

Miss Meadows was on the eve of quitting it for a time. Her acquaintance flocked like sparrows to bid her adieu. Except Lady Theodora, Adeline had few friends in her native village; but there was a large family of broad-featured, deep-voiced young ladies, of the name of Haines, who claimed to be contemporary with her, although the youngest, "my bouncing, romping, thoughtless Maria," as Mrs. Haines called her, was some years Adeline's senior. The Misses Haines, though single, had each their vocation in life. Miss Susan was serious, and took to schools; Miss Rhoda literary; Miss Maria buxom, merry, and a flirt.

They came to the Grove full of Mr. Gadsden, the one great theme of Northington; and, of course, the young ladies all abused and quizzed him, although report had already assigned him to all three.

"Do you hear the news?" cried Miss Haines to Miss Williams; "Mr. Gadsden has a whole cart-load of shells and corals in his drawing-room. Maria took me to see them; it is quite a museum. No one knows who sent them."

“He has a pair of new screens, too,” added Rhoda, as if she betrayed a secret of importance,—“covered with conundrums.”

“It is his duty to marry, to set our hearts at rest,” cried the blooming Maria. At this instant in came Mr. Gadsden; he stepped forward, then retired; then came a little forward. Six pair of eyes were fixed upon him at once. Mr. Gadsden had the nervous consciousness of a man not originally born to good society; he looked as if afraid of being carried off by storm.

His first words were addressed to Adeline, who had never dismayed him by her attentions. She never went to the school purposely while he was there; she never praised his sermons; she never inquired into the merits of his new hand-screens. Her virtues were negative, and Mr. Gadsden, who, dear, neat little man, was persecuted by the sex, felt grateful for her indifference.

He absolutely said: “Northington will miss you very much, Miss Meadows;” a solemn pause followed this declaration. Miss Williams, who could make no impression on Mr. Gadsden, was now carrying the affair off—that

is, the affair which she intended should have come on, with a high hand. She ridiculed the poor little man on every occasion, — and her ridicule was not refined. But it was not until the Miss Haines's had made their *adieux* that she raised her eyes from her satin-stitch, and began the assault.

“ Pray, Mr. Gadsden, which of the Miss Haineses do you admire most? I like the eldest; and, if she had not a bad complexion, she would be pretty. Miss Rhoda is pleasant when you can get her away from the circulating library; but that sweet romp, Maria, what say you to her?”

“ I — I don't understand these questions,” stammered Mr. Gadsden, alarmed beyond measure: “ I — I admire all the ladies” —

“ What a shame !” cried Miss Williams.

Mr. Gadsden looked confused.

“ Am I obliged to like any one of them?” he inquired, with an attempt at pleasantry which tinged even his ears with crimson from the effort.

“ Of course you are. When a gentleman calls one day, drinks tea another, dines a third, walks out a fourth with a family, — don't be

impatient, Mr. Gadsden, I was only saying, what even the postman and carrier in Northington know — he must either propose or leave the place.

“It is not a true bill — it is not the case — I don't plead guilty,” cried Mr. Gadsden, with quivering lip.

“The happiness of these virtuous girls, and the peace of mind of their fond parents, is not to be sacrificed,” continued Miss Williams, solemnly. She paused, for her victim's knees shook obviously.

“A time will come, Mr. Gadsden, when you won't be able to look a female congregation in the face. I wonder now, how you can read the marriage service with any composure.”

“And why?” asked the curate, into whose mind recollections of infatuated widows, and persevering maidens were crowding.

“—I must,” he inwardly meditated, “make an offer to some one, — this will never do! such a good curacy;” and he looked involuntarily at Adeline.

“I leave you, Mr. Gadsden, to ponder what I have said,” pursued his arch-enemy, Miss

Williams. "Miss Meadows can, perhaps, advise you."

Miss Meadows offered no advice, neither did she fly from the *tête-à-tête*. It was autumn—and she was shredding and parceling up some flower-seeds; and was so intent upon her occupation that, for some time after Louisa's flight, she did not observe that she was gone. At last, upon looking up, she beheld Mr. Gadsden—his well-brushed hat on the floor, his hands without gloves—for the clerical lilac kid had fallen down—and his feet, not as they usually were,—in the first position. All denoted unusual agitation. He started as Miss Meadows looked at him once, nay twice.

Mr. Gadsden was a man of ambition, and thought he might as well look high as low. For a person of precise habits, he admired Miss Meadows very much—for it is not natural to a gentleman of Mr. Gadsden's character to plunge into love;—he rather slips down into it. Mr. Gadsden's life was one of reason, not passion. He kept all things in order, and his favourite sermon was one of Blair's upon that incomparable subject, which he preached annually, diluted and mystified with some scraps

of his own introduction; for Blair has little of that approved and practised theological phraseology which most clergymen think indispensable, such as the "Armour of Faith,"—"the Sun of Righteousness,"—"Dayspring of Truth,"—"Breastplate of Conscience," &c. &c. With the aid of these, and other well-considered phrases, Mr. Gadsden turned out a very good dish of Blair, seasoned to the taste of an English congregation—and his sermon on Order was generally to be looked for on the first Sunday after the New Year.

Mr. Gadsden had had many scruples about a wife, but he felt that his hour was come. It would be better to set the minds of the Miss Haines's at rest before his Rector, Dr. Burslem, interfered, as other Rectors had done,—before the contagion spread, and other ladies fell in love. He had turned over in his mind the merits of Miss Meadows more than once; he had seen much to admire, and little to blame. "The Grove" was always beautifully neat, and Adeline was a model of quiet, simple, dress. The only thing Mr. Gadsden had ever regretted was to see that she hung

up her bonnet, while she was gardening, on a tree; and that she once or twice lost her keys. But these were errors which, marrying a sensible man, she might in time correct.

When Adeline looked at Mr. Gadsden a second time, he felt, as he described it to himself, 'flustered,' yet her looking so, gave him courage to speak out. Indeed he was disposed to think it was expected.

He began! "Hem, I feel very nervous, uncommonly nervous; I am placed in an awkward situation, Miss Meadows; do you know anybody who can help me out of the wood. *I* can't see my way at all. *Can you?*"

"Indeed I cannot, Mr. Gadsden."

"Hum (but she still stays). You see it is better for a clergyman to be a married man, Miss Meadows — do *you* think so?"

"Perhaps it is; but not so necessary at Northington, as at other places, as Dr. Burslem is married, and Mrs. Burslem is so very active among the schools, and other things."

"One must come to a decision," said Mr. Gadsden, with a heavy sigh, "at some time of one's life. I am sure, Miss Meadows, as to the Miss Haines's, I think nothing of them, and

there is only one person in Northington that I *can* think of."

"The gulph is now passed," thought the curate.

To his surprise Adeline took no notice, sitting calmly over her seeds, with a somewhat puzzled air, as she shelled some dianthus seeds. She thought, as most gardeners do, of the future—that future which may never come to any of us—of how, and where she should dispose her gay bed of larkspur next year—though next year he who had delighted in that which delighted her, would not behold her flowers.

Mr. Gadsden did not permit her long to revel in such calm anticipations. His next speech startled the fair gardener, and her seeds fell from her hand. "I feel very nervous, Miss Meadows; I wish it was the custom in these matters for the ladies to speak first. (I know some ladies who would have no objection, thought the curate.) Where people understand each other, there is no occasion to say much, is there, Miss Meadows?"

"On what subject?" exclaimed his auditor,

looking up, whilst the colour came into her cheeks.

“ Since you ask me on what subject; since you wish me to explain;” and here Mr. Gadsden gave his hat a little brush with his coat sleeve; “ I can have no objection. Perhaps it would have been more correct to have had it go through Mr. Meadows; but ardent attachment, sincere devotion, admiration”—“ I have found language, indeed, now,” thought the Curate.

“ I have long wished to marry,—that is, I have wished since I knew you, Miss Meadows. That little adventure of the bull brought things to a crisis, and taught me my own feelings. I don't know how *you* felt, but I could not sleep after it for a week! When a man's mind is made up, it *is* made up. I dare say you have observed that I have called nowhere so often as here; that in all things I have followed your wishes at the Sunday-school. But to proceed to business; certain little awkward reports about — about my having injured the peace of mind of other ladies will not, I hope, prejudice your good father against me. I can assure you, I am as innocent as a

lamb of what Mrs. George Wilson and the Miss Taddys have attributed to me. I trust what is now going to happen will set their minds completely at rest. It has been a time of trial to me, Miss Meadows."

"Who talks of 'trial' in Miss Meadows' society?" said a voice behind the Curate, for Sir Tufton Tyrawley at this moment entered the room. "The trial is to hear that she is going away." He bowed to Adeline as he spoke.

"Perhaps I am in the way?" he added, looking at the flushed cheek of Adeline. He then cast his eyes upon Mr. Gadsden, who had risen, and who looked somewhat foolish.

"Say one word, and I vanish! What! no reply from either? Then to punish ye both, I will sit down; you don't seem well, Mr. Gadsden?"

"Only a little, rather nervous, thank ye, Sir Tufton" — "I don't like things left in this unsettled state," thought the Curate. "I could have got a frank from Sir Tufton, and there would have been time to write to my brother that all was arranged."

Mr. Gadsden pulled out a gold watch, to

which dangled four massive seals, as he revolved the matter in his mind.

“ You dine at four, don't ye ? ” asked Sir Tufton, somewhat cavalierly, for the deportment of this specimen of by-gone aristocracy was quite different to ladies and to gentlemen whom he considered of inferior rank to himself. To the latter it was abrupt, sometimes familiar, sometimes haughty. To the fair sex he was invariably courteous and deferential.

“ I do, Sir Tufton, ” answered the little man, bowing ; “ and it wants, as you say, but five minutes to four. ”

“ It will take you fully that time to walk to your lodging. It is a very good hour to dine, four o'clock ; a very good hour — later is bad for one's health, ” said Sir Tufton, with some impatience.

Mr. Gadsden still lingered. How provoked *she* must be at this interruption, he thought. If it would not look odd to the Haines's, I would make an excuse to look in this evening. I should like to set her mind at ease, that I *would* come.

“ Ain't you going ? ” asked Sir Tufton, abruptly. “ Don't you see that while you stay

you are keeping Miss Meadows quite in a nervous state? She can neither speak nor look; you are a dangerous fellow, Gadsden?"

"He suspects!" thought the Curate. "Now I can't stand quizzing, and besides, old Mrs. Fearon will be in a fury if" — "I wish you good morning, Miss Meadows." — "How chilling an adieu! Poor girl! But I will explain all afterwards."

The Curate strutted away; closed the hall-door. A large Newfoundland dog, which had a distressing habit of putting his paws upon the shoulders of those whom he liked, lay on the steps. Frightened as Mr. Gadsden usually was at this creature, he now passed him, in all the elation of being next to an engaged man. As he bent his course to a neat farmhouse where his rooms were, he reflected with a sort of triumphant commiseration, — if one may use such a phrase, — on the ladies who would be disappointed.

"They have driven me to it! they have brought it on themselves. That Miss Williams! — 'The man who should buy her for a fool, will have a bad bargain,' as the old proverb says."

Meantime, Sir Tufton seated himself in the Curate's vacant chair, which he drew a little nearer to Adeline than Mr. Gadsden had done. Sir Tufton was, in truth, a real lover. Beneath an encrustment of much pride, some selfishness, and a little slyness, lay deep feeling, which had been checked, not cultivated, by an education which had constantly made self-interest the polar-star to conduct. Sir Tufton had scarcely defined to himself his sentiments for Adeline. Her fortune was an object to him; and he had been charmed by the intellectual character of her beauty on first acquaintance. When he knew more of her, the gentle good sense, tenderness, and delicacy of feeling, mingled with that perfect innocence of mind which renders well-bred English girls peculiarly charming—attracted his respect. He saw her, too, amid the pretending,—free from pretension: among the vulgar,—raised not only by her native refinement, but by the absence of all intrigue to seem genteel. This was a crowning virtue in the eyes of the shrewd man of the world, who could detect the assumption of the low-born with a glance. There was a pensive indifference to all man-

kind, a reluctance to be brought forward; and sometimes an abstraction of manner, which excited Sir Tufton's interest. He knew that she had been addressed by Mr. Stanhope Floyer, and that those addresses had failed. Sir Tufton had a kind heart; and he felt indignant when, at one time, he thought that Adeline had been ill-used; and he became inquisitive as to the real state of her sentiments. During the summer months, before the shooting began, these thoughts had grown upon him. The partridges had a little interfered with his attachment:—all October he was better;—the pheasants had befriended him. It was now the beginning of November, and there was a little interregnum before the hunting commenced; and Sir Tufton, who was rather of a susceptible nature, felt really very much in love indeed.

It was without hope that he determined to make an offer; without hope, be it said, *this* time; but the rejected man, he well knew, has always a little interest in the female heart. Wary Sir Tufton! He began by rallying Adeline upon Mr. Gadsden's visit; the Curate's manner, appearance, even the cut of his hair

and the tie of his cravat were themes not unworthy of amusement to Sir Tufton. He ran on, until he made Adeline laugh;—and then, suddenly changing his tone, he asked with some anxiety on his countenance, how long she purposed remaining at Coughton Hall.

“The duration of my visit,” replied Adeline, “is to depend entirely upon Lady Theodora. I go with her, and I shall, I dare say, return with her.”

“You will find the family at Coughton much enlivened by the sojourn of Mr. and Mrs. Lawson,” said Sir Tufton; “*he* is—nobody—that is to say, he is just an agreeable man, a man of straw, having neither family nor fortune. My cousin has both, however.”

“Cousin! Is Mrs. Lawson your cousin?”

“Yes;—the Wentworths and Tyrawleys were conjoined a generation or two back; and I take it my late cousin, Sir Roger Wentworth, would not have been displeased if a second alliance had taken place between the houses, in the persons of my unworthy self and my cousin Millecent. But Lawson met her at the Bath assemblies—had a hand-

some leg, Irish wit, and Irish poverty too! Lady Wentworth did a very foolish thing in giving her consent, and they have been living on the young minor, Sir Horace, ever since; but Coughton is large enough for them all. Do you like the thoughts of your visit?" he added, with a sudden change of tone, and fixing his eyes upon those of Adeline with a tenderness of expression unwonted.

Adeline could have said that she liked any place except home, but she merely answered, "she supposed she should."

A silence ensued. It was broken by Adeline's saying:—"I will enquire whether my father is at home. You will, perhaps, excuse me, I must prepare for my arrangements for to-morrow."

"Stay one moment," cried Sir Tufton, arresting her progress to the bell. "I came to speak to *you*. Permit me the honour of one moment's conversation. I would not for the world urge a topic disagreeable to you. I would not breathe it to Mr. Meadows, unless,—which I can hardly hope,—it were sanctioned by you. Hear me for an instant. I feel honoured in the avowal of a deep and earnest

attachment to you. May I hope it will ever be returned? My hand, my fortune, the sphere in life to which I would raise—I mean to say, secure to — you, these I cast at *your* disposal. I know I am making a very rash disclosure; but it is an honest one!”

It was honest, for Sir Tufton could not combat with his feelings. The tears came into his eyes; his cheeks were suffused with one general red; even the fit of his coat seemed altered by the action of his throbbing heart.

Adeline was touched by the unusual eloquence with which feeling had endowed Sir Tufton. But still she doubted his attachment; it was not that she cherished a mean suspicion that he wished only for her fortune; but she could not imagine how he could ever bring down his notions of aristocratic dignity to address an attorney's daughter. Her surprise was painted in her countenance.

Sir Tufton gained courage from her astonishment. He fixed his eyes stedfastly upon the face of Adeline.

“If I might be but permitted to correspond”—he began—then he hesitated; for this member of — what King James intended should

be—the “lesser order of nobility,” was no adept in epistolary correspondence. A letter was to him a work of time and thought, a labour—a composition. Men write from the head; women from the heart. Sir Tufton turned out a finished production, with a flourish at the end of his name, after the fashion of writing-schools in his days; but the energies of his genius were oppressed, he was, morally speaking, under a shower-bath whenever he wrote.

“If my worthy friend, Mr. Meadows,” he resumed, thinking better of it, “will not deem my visits here an intrusion—which, upon explanation,—”

“—Oh, sir! for Heaven’s sake, do not speak to my father,” cried Adeline, with a countenance of such unfeigned alarm, that Sir Tufton, affronted, drew back.

“Would my addresses do so much dishonour to Miss Meadows?” he asked, almost fiercely.

“Oh no!—none—none—but my father—I would rather my father knew nothing about it. I think I hear his step—be so kind as to withdraw, if you would not subject me to— to persecution.”

“And am I to attribute your fears to dread

of his displeasure, — or to a fear of his approval, Miss Meadows?"

The language of a lover's hope, the bitterness of a lover's disappointment, were not new to Adeline. Too early do wealth and beauty learn to comprehend them. Recovering her self-possession, she addressed to Sir Tufton those words which should banish hope:— she announced that it was impossible she could ever listen to him when he spoke on that subject. She entreated him as the greatest favour that he could bestow upon her, never to allow her father to know of his suit — of her refusal.

Her speech was hurried, but not unkind— and as she finished it, she proffered her hand to Sir Tufton in token of friendship. "Am I, then, refused?" thought Sir Tufton. "True, it was expected, but why did I offer?"

He touched Adeline's hand ceremoniously, and turned about to look for his gloves and cane. Sir Tufton was what is called a peppery little man, and his pride was stronger than his affections.

"I shall obey your commands—I shall never — never trouble Mr. Meadows," he said, buttoning up his coat with great vehemence.

Then with forced calmness, he added—"If you have any commands for London — I leave Tufton Court for two years. The house,"—he almost gnashed his teeth as he spoke—"will be under repair for that time. I wish you a very good morning, Miss Meadows. Be assured you need never be under the least apprehension of my ever speaking to Mr. Meadows on this, or any other subject."

He finished the last button of his coat, and vanished as he did so. The hall-door being shut to with some violence, and Lion, the dog, yelling as if he had received a rebuff in his rough caresses, startled Adeline from a brown study.

Sir Tufton felt very warm, very warm, indeed, until he found himself outside the gates of the Grove. He was like one of those who play at a game formerly called "Magic Music." Some little article is hidden: and when those who seek it are near it, the person who is in the secret cries, "hot, hot;" when it is not found the searcher is supposed to be cold as ice. Sir Tufton cooled ere he had strutted down the length of the palings which encompassed the shrubbery of the grove. Then he was seen

to stop; and to gaze up through the boughs of an acacia at a certain window of the Grove. Resentment had fled, and true feeling, regret, vexation, love, overmastered the warm-tempered baronet. He looked earnestly for a few minutes, and then sighing deeply, hurried on to Tufton Court. The sheltered approach to his house;—the green lawn on which it stood;—the dark and aristocratic cedar, which cast its sombre shade on that lawn; the rushing of a fountain which played near the house;—the handsome façade of an ancient structure in which were subservient lacqueys ready to fly at the will of Sir Tufton, failed to soothe his irritated feelings. He entered the hall, and withdrew into a library in which he enjoyed every luxury, save the love of study. He flung his gloves down on the table with impatience, and then, throwing himself on a sofa, his eyes involuntarily rested upon the portrait of his uncle, from whom he had inherited his estate and title. Sir Everard Tyrawley had mingled with the great, and with them solely, and his descendant, as he looked at his portly form, wondered what *he* would think could he know that his representative

had stooped to address, and had been refused by, an attorney's daughter ! who, Sir Tufton then just remembered, was grand-niece to his uncle's steward. It is astonishing how affronts revive one's memory as to pedigrees ; especially if there happens to be a blot in the escutcheon of those who are not so civil to our greatness as we expect. All that we have to add touching Sir Tufton is, that he was stated in Northington to have a slight feverish attack on the following day, when a trifling indisposition, to use his own phrase, prevented his joining the hunt.

CHAPTER X.

" Happy is England ! I could be content
To see no other verdure than its own ;
To feel no other breezes than are blown
Through its tall woods with high romances blent :
Happy is England ! "

KEATS.

THOSE who have traced the course of the Derwent as it winds among the Derbyshire hills, must remember a delicious valley, between Matlock and Bakewell, called by the gentle name of Darley-Dale. Beneath its heights, the river, escaping from the rocks of Matlock, seems to rejoice as it runs through rich meadows ; whilst, lost sometimes to the eye, between alders and willows, then, re-appearing, dashes over a bed of rock, and hurries on, smiling, on the blue sky which it reflects, until, amid the wild and woody glen called Monsal Dale, the stream disappears.

A broad macadamized road now relieves

the tourist of all peril in making his way from Matlock to the country of the Peak; but as the travellers whom I now desire my readers to follow, drove along in a faded yellow chariot, they had to encounter a rough and narrow road ere they passed the sequestered village of Darley, and remarked its old church spire rising in the valley among luxuriant trees. In these days, many a pleasant villa, the offspring of wealth and of taste, varies the road-side. The cliffs to the right, and the vale to the left, alike afford homes of peace and beauty to those who are too wise to stay in crowds, too social to flee to solitude. The Dale is the abode of peace, health, and benevolence: it is the region of flowers, which grow luxuriantly on its shelving braes — the haunt of such as love sylvan sports, — the resort of the angler, — the scene where the young artist seeks inspiration from the aspect of nature — romantic, not wild; — cultured, — yet not changed by man in those features which God hath assigned to this fair and happy valley.

Ere you come to Rowslie, — a little village by the side of the Derwent, which, beautifying

and blessing as it goes, is there arrested by a mill-dam; — and before you enter the stone porch of that antiquated inn which, standing in a trim garden, seems from its gables and stone latticed windows more like an ancient yeoman's house than an inn — before you stop, as all should do, to partake of the trout which none know how to dress better than the hostess of Rowslie, look up! traveller, to the right. Sharp crags of rock frown on the winding-road, and the dark pine waves over their summits. A steep road, the sandy soil of which forms a fine tint in the artist's eye, winds round what is called the Fir Cliff; ascend yet higher, until your view commands the Dale, and gain the proud pre-eminence of the Stone Cliff. A low stone wall, such as would disfigure any scene of less surpassing beauty, runs round a domain now curtailed of its extent, and a gate, modern and mean, opens upon a grassy bank, half-lawn, half-park, on which stands the remnant of an old grey house, the type only of what has been — the wreck of power and wealth, the monument of pride, of guilt, and of remorse.

It was November when Lady Theodora and

Adeline Meadows, drove to the massive iron gates surmounted with the Wentworth arms, by which the approach to Coughton House was in those days guarded. Lodges are an imitation, an attempted revival of recent date, a faint and sycophantic resemblance to the detached gateways of old castles and manor-houses. Our ancestors of the Stuart times went boldly up to their houses, the massive iron gates being thrown open at their approach; moats had fallen into disuse, and the stately avenue, not defensive, had succeeded to the tower and ramparts, which had formerly been essential for protection.

Coughton House, or Hall, had, when Lady Theodora repaired thither, a handsome doorway, decorated in the same style as the gate, with the armorial bearings of the family. To what is still left of Coughton there is now but a mean entrance, opening at once into spacious but low rooms; and rumour asserts that the great front and all its fair apartments, were pulled down, within the memory of man, to banish remembrance of scenes which those old walls had witnessed, or to accommodate the residence of the family to its decaying fortunes.

But I write of bygone times, and I shall introduce my readers, if they will follow me, into Coughton House such as it was some fifty years ago.

Lady Theodora and her companion passed at once into a hall of rude architecture, the defects of which were well-concealed by pictures of Schneider's and of Rubens's, which gave life to the dull panels. A young man of delicate aspect was arranging some fishing-tackle at one end of the Hall. Beside him stood a gentleman somewhat older; and while Lady Theodora was parleying with the servants and postilions, Adeline had a few minutes' leisure to remark these two persons.

Both of them were dressed in the extreme of fashion; and in those days that was saying much. The youth carried off the richness of his dress with a carelessness that seemed to intimate early habits of splendour in attire. He dashed the snuff over his shirt-frill, and left it even on the fine cloth suit which he wore. His companion, on the contrary, had turned back the cuffs of his coat whilst he assisted at some operations which might have proved injurious to his sleeves. He appeared to direct the

youth with authority, and to receive an extraordinary deference from him, who was, as Adeline surmised, the heir and master of the house.

Both gentlemen turned round as Lady Theodora's name was announced. The youth, displaying a mild aspect, hung shily back; the elder gentleman came forward with a grace that might have become a palace. He trod the hall with the skilful step of one born for Carlton House or Versailles. He bowed with somewhat less of the grace of a dancing-master, and more than that of a gentleman. Bows were bows in those days. Mr. Lawson, as the groom of the chamber announced him to be, drew his feet into the first position, and bent his body, not merely his head, with an air of deference, instantly succeeded by a courteous dignity, as he rose, and remained as he had first placed himself. He was very handsome; his blue eyes had, at first aspect, a winning sweetness in their glance; his complexion was fair as that of a girl's; his lips unclosed only to shew a row of most perfect teeth; perhaps they shewed them rather too often for sincerity; perhaps his voice was *too* sweet, his air too re-

spectful for the genuine man to be revealed. Yet he had the self-possession of a skilful actor on the stage of genteel life, and self-possession imparts the consciousness of power.

Sir Horace, as Mr. Lawson introduced him, was twice called forward by his friend before he left off trifling with his rod and line, or could summon face to meet the strangers. As he advanced, his pale countenance was suffused with blushes, which, beautiful as they are on woman, do but disfigure man. Sir Horace had a dark, but dull, unhealthy eye. His forehead projected, his head was over large, his limbs were small, and his body was drooping. There was every appearance of his being that unfortunate creature, a mother's darling;—cramped, coddled, and coaxed in infancy, humoured in childhood, watched, and over-directed in manhood.

Mr. Lawson, with infinite grace, devolved Lady Theodora upon the young baronet, whose trembling arm, stick-like, was accepted by her ladyship;—Mr. Lawson conducting Adeline, they passed into the morning-room, from the windows of which the varied features of the Dale were seen. A door opened into an

inner apartment, whence issued sounds of a young clear voice, practising solfeggios.

“Millecent,” said Mr. Lawson, advancing to the door of the apartment, “come to welcome your friends.”

“But I can’t master that air Grassini sang,” answered a sweet voice in accents of impatience. The speaker appeared as she spoke. She was very young, fair as most girls of high degree in England are desirous of being, with golden hair, parted back from her brow, but hanging behind her ears in two thick curls. A little mob cap, stuck on the back of her head, and adorned with cherry-coloured ribands, detracted not from her youthful appearance. Her countenance was beautiful from its bloom, and from the gaiety of heart which broke forth in ready smiles; her form was short and somewhat round; but her movements were full of playfulness.

“Mrs. Lawson,” said her husband, ceremoniously, as he led her to Lady Theodora, “Lady Wentworth is — where, Millecent?”

“In the steward’s room, I make no doubt, looking over musty account-books. Won’t you go up stairs with *me*, and refresh yourself,

Lady Theodora?" Mrs. Lawson put her hand on Lady Theodora's arm as she spoke. "Bless me, what a pretty lustring! Lawson, isn't that a sweet dress? Ring; ring the bell, Horace; where are all the people?—Lawson just shut the harpsichord, mamma's so particular. Now, Lady Theodora, this way. Fa la la, fa la la, how that air runs in my head."

"Have you brought anything new with you, Miss Meadows?" inquired Mrs. Lawson, as they stopped at the dressing-room door. "May I see your last new hat? Don't think me rude;—we are so buried here, we never know what happens in the world, what is worn or what is not worn. It is a miserable state to be in. By the by, I don't like to laugh at her, as she is mamma's friend;—but what a sallow, crab-visaged old thing Lady Theodora is grown; and what a mantle! It is quite a relief to look at yours!"

Good-tempered and idle, Mrs. Lawson had married at that age when rational education should begin; and a child at eighteen, she would probably be a child at eight-and-twenty. It was the common observation of her friends, that she had no harm in her; but they forgot

that sins of omission are oftentimes as pernicious as sins of commission. Every human creature has his appointed duties in life, and where the energies which God has given us are bestowed on frivolous objects, some momentous ends of our existence must be unfulfilled.

“Mamma,” exclaimed Mrs. Lawson, as she opened the dressing-room door, and a middle-aged lady, very portly, and with head thrown back, issued from a door on the landing-place. — “Mamma — Miss Meadows. Lady Theodora is in the blue-room. Did you mean the chintz rooms for Miss Meadows? Well then, all is right,” said Mrs. Lawson, looking timidly at her mother. She turned into the apartment, and Lady Wentworth, having paid the customary compliments to Adeline, walked into the gallery.

Lady Wentworth was a person to inspire fear. Of a harsh nature and violent passions, she lived too much in retirement to assume, for any length of time, the bland manner which became her degree. Her affability was the effect of impulse, not of benevolence of character. Her regard was always extravagant, but transient. Like Queen Anne, “her

friendships were flames of fire," as the Duchess of Marlborough describes them; whilst the disgust and hatred which often succeeded ill-based and inordinate fancies, were unmitigated and unrelenting. It is no excuse to say that her dislikes were often, nay generally, founded on some good cause; — for Lady Wentworth was shrewd and discerning — such resentments, even when just, are forbidden us; and if we attempt to disguise their unchristian nature to ourselves, we do but still more endanger our happiness here and hereafter.

Lady Wentworth had early become a widow, and had been entrusted with the property of her son. Her daughter, by the unjust custom which is now in great families "honoured in the breach," was left by her father's will very scantily provided for. Lady Wentworth revered the advantages of birth, but she loved those of fortune; hence, the rich member of her family, her son, had the greatest share in her affections. He represented all that made life valuable in her eyes, and in his life hers was bound up. For his sake she lived now in a state comparatively humble to that which Coughton House had witnessed in

the former baronet's time. For his sake she endured tutors and dancing-masters when he was young, and went to live near Eton during his school-days. For his sake, she had none but plain and elderly maidens to attend upon her, lest he should fall in love, as wiser men had done, with some tiring-woman of his mother's. For his sake, she watched every farmer's daughter who at church dared to raise her eyes too often to the parlour-pew, where the meek young baronet hung his head. For his sake, she gave up her winters in London, lest the youth should be the prey of fortune-hunters, male or female. For his sake she sold all his father's hunters, nay, even his hounds and sporting-dogs, lest the precious youth should break *his* neck and *her* heart! Nay, the gentle occupations of fishing, archery, bowling, battledore, billiards, and dominoes (for chess he had not intellect), were all the recreations which the anxiety of Lady Wentworth permitted to her son. Futile cares! "I dreaded," said Mrs. Montague, speaking of an only son, "all sorts of perils for my child — perils by sea and by land — and he died from the pain of a tooth."

One winter, when Sir Horace was safely domesticated with a private tutor — a clergyman, without daughters — Lady Wentworth ventured to Bath. She took with her her daughter, whose mind and heart she had never guarded by culture, by instilling correct — the only correct — religious motives, — or by inculcating a love of employment.

Millecent Wentworth was light-hearted, light-headed, and comely. Restrained in girlhood on every point, dressed with rigid economy, for she was almost dependant, no money bestowed on her that could be hoarded to swell the fortunes of her brother, she now revelled in all the luxury of extravagance at Bath because it was her mother's pleasure that no one should out-vie Miss Wentworth. It was the gayest season of that once-dissipated city, and much of its attractions were that winter attributed to the young and handsome master of the ceremonies, the theme of every library, rout, and *conversazione*. It was the fashion to invite this dignitary to parties of the highest rank : but Lady Wentworth abjured the custom. She took her daughter, however, to the rooms, and there, opening the ball in a minuet, with

a duchess for his partner, Millicent Wentworth first saw the hero of whom all Bath was talking,—the accomplished, seductive, Mr. Lawson.

Mr. Lawson had, through high favour, just obtained the appointment which Nash rendered tenable to a gentleman. His acquaintance were numerous, but no one seemed to have known him long. Some said he was of Irish extraction, others of a good Scotch family;—it was a mystery how and whence he had sprung into notice. He had served, he said, in foreign campaigns, but no sunburnt coarseness disfigured his perfect complexion. His bow, his slide, his step, were inimitable; but he declared that these were self-taught. Nature seemed to have formed him for a dancing-master; education for something better. He had a smattering of most things; loved philosophy, and, especially, chemistry, over which a sort of mystical importance was thrown in those incurious days. He was musical, and painted indifferently well. Too deeply versed in the sophistry of French metaphysics, he was detected by the men, as they sat after dinner,

in unsound and dangerous doctrines. With the ladies he was less excursive; and though supposed to know everything, he veiled his acquirements in their society.

The Bath ladies were mad that winter. A sort of apotheosis of Mr. Lawson went on. Not to weary the reader with details, whilst Lady Wentworth was curtsying her thanks every evening to Mr. Lawson for his assiduity in finding her daughter suitable partners, an under-plot was going on of which she had not the least notion. One morning, towards the close of the season, Millicent sought her mother in the dressing-room—all tears of course—and announced—(it was before the marriage act)—that she was married to Mr. Lawson.

Every one expected that Lady Wentworth would turn her daughter out of doors, but Mr. Lawson's good genius willed it otherwise. Lady Wentworth was soon morally magnetized by him, as other people were; she forgave the imprudence of her daughter, and took the young people home to live with her. Perhaps one circumstance that reconciled her to the match was, that she fancied Mr. Lawson might be a beneficial guide to her son, who, she could

not but perceive, was growing up shy, awkward and ignorant, in spite of Eton and Oxford. Be that as it may, Mr. Lawson soon acquired a most extraordinary influence over Lady Wentworth and her household, son, daughter, servants, horses, dogs, and birds included. By degrees his sway over the heart of the daughter, indeed, diminished. *She* saw into the deep selfishness of the man; wives soon learn such secrets as those. *She* read the heart of the smiling Mr. Lawson, and, simple as she was, soon felt that he had not married her for herself. But she concealed that knowledge; aided by a temperament all blithe and sanguine, she veiled under childish gaiety many a heart-ache, and bore in silence the subdued ill-temper of one who was the charm of society, and the most amiable of his sex — to strangers. — Such were the inmates of Coughton.

—At half-past four o'clock, a ponderous dinner-bell resounded through the house, and Adeline, meeting Lady Theodora in an anti-chamber, repaired to the drawing-room. It was situated on the ground-floor, and looked upon a lawn, bounded by a grassy terrace

on the one hand, and by a belt of evergreens on the other. There was no view; our ancestors seem purposely to have debarred themselves the indulgence of prospect in their dwellings. A view, to their minds, was to be attained by ascending a mount, or sitting in a turret, or was granted to the soliloquy of a summer-house, glass all round, and placed angle-wise, in which heroines from the days of Charlotte Smith to those of Caroline of Lichfield were sure to meet with adventures. But they were compensated for such privations; and from the drawing-room of Coughton House, a close yew-hedge on the terrace, and the finely-spreading evergreens of the belt, gave an air of comfort to the little home-scene which the lawn presented. In its centre stood a sun-dial, and, at one extremity, an aviary; old-fashioned, but pleasant appendages:—wherefore the former is omitted in our pleasure-grounds, in this age of utility, it puzzleth me to think.

The drawing-room had been modernized, and contrasted ill with an ancient paneled billiard-room, through which one had to pass ere it was entered. Lady Wentworth received her visiters with the bustling manner of one

who has weightier affairs on her mind than those of entertaining friends. She was tall, and very stout; and her head was thrown back with habitual haughtiness. Her face was such as one sees in old family portraits of the higher classes; prominent features, the mouth well-formed, and pouting; the skin fair, and well preserved; the hair, some slender ringlets of which were scattered over the brow, while the main bulk was thrown back, was of a dark brown. Impatient to repair to the dining-room, Lady Wentworth impelled her son forward to offer the tip of his finger to Lady Theodora. She looked round at her domestic chaplain, a Mr. Vincent, as if to say "You may come forward." Mr. Lawson gracefully extended his hand to Adeline, and gave his arm to his wife; and in this order they were proceeding, when a bustle was heard in the billiard-room.

"That is our expected friend," said Mr. Lawson, stopping short; "pardon me;"—and he disappeared for an instant.

For no one except Mr. Lawson would Lady Wentworth have paused for an instant in her transit to the dining-room. She bore the delay with great composure.

“ My friend,” said Mr. Lawson, returning, “ *is* arrived. Mr. Fortescue cannot appear in his travelling-suit, therefore —”

“ Oh, tell him we will pardon his disorder of dress,” cried Lady Wentworth, impatiently; “ I hate that guests should come in at the end of dinner. Bid him come, if you approve,” she added, softening her tone.

Mr. Lawson, all good humour and deference, again retired.

“ — Sir Horace, keep your counsel,” he whispered in a tone of grave rebuke to the young baronet, who was tittering indecorously: “ I blush, my Lady, I blush, Lady Theodora, to trespass thus on your kind forbearance.”

He vanished; and Lady Wentworth, addressing herself to no one, said, “ Mr. Lawson is right. Mr. Lawson has always some good reason for what he does.” Whilst she thus spoke, Mr. Lawson and the new visitant entered the room.

Adeline started as she raised her eyes to the stranger, for the Mr. Eustace of Wolstone memory appeared before her. Introductions were then matters of course; and the young gentleman was presented to all the company severally.

He blushed when he saw Adeline; but when he looked at Lady Theodora, his cheeks and lips even became very pale. No one heeded his disturbance, save Adeline; and Mrs. Lawson being consigned to Mr. Fortescue, the party walked in stately couples to the dining-room.

This room was old enough to satisfy any antiquary; it was low-roofed, and long. Some attempts to modernize it had been abandoned in despair. The reigns of the Georges, with reverence be it spoken, were eras of bad taste. "Antiquity went out with the Stuarts," as Mr. Lawson observed, when the hurried grace of the chaplain was closed. "The last proprietor of Coughton House, before Lady Wentworth and her late lord came to bless it, did all he could to make this room look like a ship's cabin; he cut down the panels, put on that vile striped paper to make it look modern; and I don't know," he added, lowering his voice, "that it is quite in good taste to have modern portraits in hoops, hung up next to mailed knights, and dames in wimples."

"All will be altered," said Lady Wentworth,

abruptly, "when my Horace comes of age; and oh, that the day was come!"

"Amen! will I venture to say, though not so reverend a character as Mr. Vincent," cried Mr. Lawson. "Fortescue, how did *you* find the roads? Lady Theodora complains of our Derbyshire ruts. I suppose," he muttered in a low tone to Adeline, "the legitimate topic of conversation is, in country-houses, the roads,—the tolls, the game,—the hens and chickens, to descend to *very* small talk indeed."

—"Mr. Fortescue!" exclaimed Adeline, hastily; "I thought that his name was Eustace."

"Yes, Eustace, Eustace Fortescue. But you have not met him before?"

"I saw him once; and the more I look at him the more I see his likeness to ——" Adeline stopped, blushing, she was off her guard.

"To whom?" asked Mr. Lawson, bending low to whisper to her; "to whom? I never saw anyone he was like, except my friend Stanhope Floyer; you don't know *him*?"

"I did, indeed."

"I did indeed!' There is something plaintive in the tone of your voice, Miss Meadows. Stanhope Floyer is not the man to give up an

acquaintance with a blooming, lovely young lady, unless he is turned out; a chance that he may happen to merit."

"Have you, then, so bad an opinion of him?" asked Adeline, timidly; her voice tremulous, and her cheeks crimson; yet curiosity, prompted by love, got the better of bashfulness.

"Hum! Do you know him? you said you did." Mr. Lawson hesitated for an instant; and then, suddenly turning to Adeline, he said, in a firm tone, and with much openness of manner, "He is as honest and good-hearted a fellow as ever lived."

Adeline could scarcely help blessing him for these words. She looked down and began to eat, to conceal her emotion; but was entranced in a reverie of some moments' duration. When she looked up, she saw Mr. Fortescue's eyes fixed on her with a peculiar and earnest observation which embarrassed her.

The dinner was dull and long, even with Mr. Lawson's conversational assistance; what it would have been without him, no one could calculate. There are some characters with whom the burden of society seems to rest,—the task of redeeming stupidity from weariness. It

is a sorry undertaking, monotonous as the round of a postman, and laborious as the business of a newspaper-writer. Mr. Lawson secretly looked down upon the capacity of those with whom he consorted; despised, whilst he flattered their weaknesses; blessed his stars that *he* had not lived all his days in such company.

Lady Theodora's cultivated intellect could alone prove a match for that of the travelled Lawson; but then her ideas were romantic, her theories impracticable. There was a visionary character about her mind which laid her open to the coarse condemnation of Lady Wentworth. Contemporary as they were, these two had never been friends. Lady Wentworth was originally coarse, with scarcely the power of comprehending nice and delicate feelings. She laughed at love, and had never even pretended to the sentiment. Generosity she thought best bestowed upon herself, and her own family; "charity begins at home" was her favourite maxim, and it seldom left her home. By an habitual assertion of her own due, and not from the affection of a husband worn into submission by her determined character, Lady Wentworth had obtained am-

ple settlements for herself, and unlimited power over her son. Lady Theodora, on the contrary, had managed so ill as to have neither fortune nor power. Had she married Sir Roger Wentworth, her lot had been happier. How often, in this world of mistakes, we see the old school-story of the two Tarquins over again. The fierce Tarquinia married to the gentle brother; the gentle Tullia bound for life to the blood-thirsty and ill-tempered Tarquin.

Sympathy, therefore, between these two lady friends, as they were called, was impossible. They agreed always remarkably well for two days; but Lady Wentworth's abrupt and ill-bred manners were certain, after that period, to arouse the inflammable parts of Lady Theodora's captious nature. Little freedom of conversation was, therefore, to be expected, when such passions as fear, on the one hand, and contempt, on the other, were boiling, though subdued.

Mrs. Lawson was intimidated by her mother's arbitrariness, although she strove by an endeavour at pleasantry to disguise her fear. Sir Horace had been too long schooled to be happy, when the "dowager," as he termed

his mother to his two intimates, Mr. Lawson and his own head-groom, was sitting opposite to him, watching every turn of his eyes. For it was, — “ Horace, Sir Horace Wentworth, now do try and carve these chickens yourself—the wing first—there! Mr. Lawson, will you be good enough to show him? — Horace — Sir Horace! Lady Theodora has not taken wine! — My dear, dear Horace, do not say so!” when some symptom of stupidity more than usual had appeared in the young baronet’s discourse.

Mr. Fortescue seemed as little at his ease as any one of the party. His manner was peculiar, sometimes nervously agitated. Adeline once even saw tears in his eyes. But towards the end of dinner-time the atmosphere of society, to speak metaphorically, cleared up. Mr. Fortescue and Mr. Lawson came into collision in an argument, — or rather, I should say, there was sufficient difference of opinion to elicit the intellectual powers of both. Mr. Fortescue was romantic, an enthusiast, and eloquent; but he had also been a student under those great minds which to contemplate is to imitate. According to the fashion of that day, when foreign universities were unattain-

able, Mr. Fortescue, after an Oxford career, had been sent to Edinburgh, there to "sit at the feet" of the great professors who illumined the last years of the eighteenth century—Robertson, Dugald Stewart! What master-minds have been formed under those departed spirits! — Brougham, Jeffrey, Lansdowne, Cockburn, Horner, Dudley, were the apt pupils of a period later than that of which we treat.

The conversation, therefore, now took a higher flight; and Lady Theodora listened delighted. Her eyes were fixed upon those of Mr. Fortescue, as he eloquently advocated the cause of the unfortunate André, then a popular topic, and cast, as it merited, upon the character of Washington, the deep reproach of that young soldier's death.

"I know," said Mr. Fortescue earnestly, "that, judging by the policy of mankind, I am wrong; that by the laws of war, I am wrong; that General Washington stands absolved by statesmen — even by generals — of dishonour towards his unhappy prisoner. But could *you* act so? Will not the prayers of poor André's country, the tears of his mother, the fruitless regrets of her to whom he was once

attached, and who was influenced to a marriage in which her heart had no share—will not these haunt the great general on his pillow? I know not; but they should.”

“I think a man is quite authorized to take every advantage in his power, when he has his enemy within his grasp, in times of war,” returned Lawson, coolly.

“I hate these Americans,” cried Lady Wentworth, “and only wish we could take our revenge on Washington; though, as Lawson says, I think Mr. Washington did nothing but what was fair, to hang a spy. I shall certainly not call him, or any of them, generals. A race of upstart rebels,—born thieves,—whose grandfathers were nothing but pick-pockets and burglars!”

“A rising people,” observed Mr. Lawson, coolly, closing the subject, as he always did when Lady Wentworth became absurd: for, independent of the annoyance which it was to see his wife’s mother ridiculous, Mr. Lawson knew that Lady Wentworth, like the insane, perceived when she was led on to expose herself, and honoured the friendly hand which warned her to stop.

“And where,” said Lady Theodora, bending forward, and addressing herself to Mr. Fortescue, “where have you learned the sentiments which do you honour?—the love of virtue for its own sake; the hatred of all abuse of power; the just estimation of all that is honorable in the enemies of our country, the detestation of what is hard-hearted! May I ask, sir, are these the sentiments of an honoured father? or have you been so fortunate as to have your youth watched over by a high-minded and careful mother? I ask for instruction, for I have a son, who—”

“My father died when I was very young; and I have lost my mother, too,” answered Mr. Fortescue, shortly, and averting his head.

“I beg your pardon,—I am indeed concerned to have put the question,” replied Lady Theodora, conjecturing from the hasty manner of the youth that he was offended. “My usual indiscretion,” she added, smiling, to Adeline.

Lady Wentworth rose to withdraw, and the ladies accompanied her.

After the exclamations, customary and orthodox on leaving the dining-room, of,

“What a refreshing change!” “How warm the room was!” &c., &c. Lady Wentworth, addressing Lady Theodora, observed,

“My dear, you must really be careful what you say to young Fortescue. I couldn’t tell whether you were in jest or earnest—praise, or satire in disguise. Lawson’s extremely touchy about his friends. Millicent, there’s the postman’s bag; do get my key and unlock it:” and throwing herself on a chair in her drawing-room, Lady Wentworth, with a faint show of an excuse, was buried in various despatches until the gentlemen ascended to the drawing-room. Then, her ladyship, Lady Theodora, the chaplain, and Mr. Lawson, formed a pool at quadrille, at which Lady Wentworth displayed the only sort of enthusiasm that her character possessed,—the love of gain. Yet, even here, stronger passions interfered, for she first looked round to see how her son and heir was employed;—to be sure that he did not hang over the back of Miss Meadows’ chair whilst she sat netting;—to provide that he was not enticed to lounge about the harpsichord whilst Miss Meadows sang.

“How stupid in Lady Theodora to bring

that pretty girl here! Such a want of common sense! So like her!"—"Some quiet, staid woman of thirty would be a much better companion for you, than giddy girls, Lady The, my dear," she whispered to her friend, "if you *must* have a companion."—"Horace, my dear boy, your sister will play at picquet with you to-night. Take care of the draught from that door, my love. Millecent, you won't be scorched if you turn your chair *so*, and let Horace come out of that angle. Mr. Fortescue, there is a harpsichord in the next room, and if you will take the trouble, excuse my saying so, to carry that candle, we shall have the gratification of hearing Miss Meadows sing. The music of the Duenna is very pretty, isn't it, Mr. Lawson? and it is new. Horace, there's no occasion for you to be running off too:—now beat your sister at picquet, my love,—or cribbage, if you prefer it."

After a few minutes, all were seated and settled. Sir Horace, indeed, rather disturbed his mamma by rising up and peeping now and then into the music-room; but he always ran back into his place when she looked round.

Mrs. Lawson played patiently at a game which she detested; and the quadrille-table went on admirably. Here, Mr. Lawson's natural character might, for once, be seen. Lady Wentworth was his partner. That demon, which animates the gambler, "felon of his wealth," reigned paramount over Lawson. He was grave, silent, sometimes almost irritable over the quadrille-table. Lady Wentworth's face became redder and redder, and she laughed loud, as she dropped guinea after guinea into her card-purse. Lady Theodora lost, of course; and the poor chaplain rose from that fatal table with a heart-ache, crept off to bed, and resolved to counterfeit the rheumatism, rather than encounter Mr. Lawson and Lady Wentworth another night, together.

Mr. Fortescue and Adeline, meantime, first sang, then talked, then sang again in the music-room; and this is a sample of successive nights, during the first week at Coughton Hall.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Indifference, dreaded power! What art shall save
The good so cherish'd from thy grasping hand?
How shall young love escape the untimely grave
Thy treacherous arts prepare?”

Mrs. TICHE.

DURING the first week of her visit, Adeline pronounced Mr. Fortescue to be an enigma.

dom; ever with the deepest respect, almost with a tenderness of manner. Sometimes he seemed even to shun her; he was never easy in her presence. There were moments when Adeline thought him almost impertinent; he made such searching inquiries into Lady Theodora's affairs; had so many meddling hopes that she had such comforts as her rank required; and Adeline, simple as she was, began to entertain suspicions of an extraordinary nature.

Mr. Lawson, meantime, had gained her confidence; yet a natural instinct sometimes prompted her to revolt from the understanding which now seemed to be established between that gentleman and herself. He was, apparently, extremely intimate with Mr. Stanhope Floyer, and he soon seemed to discover Adeline's secret. There were few days on which he did not let fall some expression, or allude to some incident which filled the mind of the devoted Adeline with thoughts of him in whom every wish of her young heart was bound up. All that Mr. Lawson said of Stanhope Floyer made him seem generous and estimable; and whilst her natural penetration caused her to look on Mr. Lawson with dis-

trust, Adeline was won over by his preference for one with whom the world had dealt unkindly. "Oh, how I wish my father could hear Mr. Lawson speak of Mr. Floyer!" was her secret exclamation, often, when, having drunk in the loved praises of Stanhope Floyer, she went to walk upon the old terrace to cool her flushed cheek, and to calm her excited spirits by the breath of the autumn winds,—with the song of the robin.

One afternoon, when all the party from the house were riding, Adeline sauntered under the leafless, hazel hedges, which separated the pleasure domain from the park. A lane, which led to one of the great entrances of the hall ran along the other side of the hedge. It was now the end of November, and the paths were strewn with beech-nuts, so thick that the hasty depredations of the squirrel, which, startled by Adeline's footsteps, retreated up the beech-trees in the shrubbery, made no vacant spot amid the lavish harvest coveted by this tenant of the woods. Adeline was looking up, even to the topmost spray, whereon the feathery tail of the graceful little creature was visible, when sounds

of horsemen startled her. She looked through the hazel-boughs, and saw, to her dismay, Sir Tufton Tyrawley riding up the lane, followed by his groom. His face seemed grim and sour; yet, had it not been for her last interview with the baronet, she would have seen it with pleasure. It reminded her of *home*; yes, that hat, raised on one side, those grey whiskers, that self-satisfied air, all brought Northington to her remembrance. Yet she turned quickly into an avenue; walked down it without plan or forethought, how and when to regain the house, came back; entered by a wicket gate into a remote and tangled garden; then, by a sort of desperation, she sallied into the turf walks of the terrace, and stood opposite to a fountain, without knowing what next she should do.

The soft sounds of the waters, as they fell upon a stone basin, moss-grown, prevented Adeline from perceiving that some one had drawn near to her. She was relieved by seeing only Mr. Fortescue. She turned, and walked with him. It was not correct in those days for gentlemen to offer an arm; and Adeline paced along at one side of the terrace, and

her companion at the other, as if they had quarreled. Mr. Fortescue was out of spirits. He hung his fine head in dejection; and though there was always too much sweetness in his manner to admit the idea of sullenness, Adeline sometimes, and now, especially, reproached him in her own mind with a variableness of spirits not wholly compatible with good sense.

She took courage, and rallied him on his dejection.

“You,” she cried, “with health, fortune!—and now it occurs to me, you never told me where your estate is situated. In what style is your house? And if not a very impertinent question, does it at all resemble this old house? Lady Theodora and I were saying, that we fancied you had an old hall—and perhaps an inner court—in—what is the name of your seat?”

The ease of her manner seemed to render Mr. Fortescue more gloomy than previously. He answered in a low, and rather dejected tone, that he had not seen the place since he was young.

This avoidance of all particulars confirmed Adeline in a notion she had formed, and she

became as thoughtful as Mr. Fortescue. They walked to the end of the terrace, and then he stopped to see whether his companion wished to turn again.

Adeline was not desirous to return to the house before the riding party came home — so, after a moment's hesitation, she took another turn.

“Do you know, Mr. Fortescue,” she resumed, “that you are positively an enigma to me? I do not very well understand Mr. Lawson, but you are incomprehensible.”

Mr. Fortescue did not answer for some moments.

“I do not wonder at your not understanding me, Miss Meadows. I am not the ingenious character that I ought to be. I despise myself!”

“That tone of voice,” thought Adeline — “that very action of the hand, how like! He little knows how deep an interest I take in him.”

She walked on, but stopping at a seat rudely carved in wood,—the bed, as rumour would have it, of the third Richard on the night before the battle of Bosworth,—she declared she

would like to sit down. There was no view—for a mantling holly shut out the only vista which the pleasure-ground presented; but there were local beauties. A rose brier full of reddened hips hung over the dark panels of the seat; the deciduous cypress adorned it with its feathery and richly-tinted sprays; besides, the nook was sunny, though retired.

Mr. Fortescue stood gloomily by Adeline. The sounds of Mrs. Lawson's merry voice at this moment struck upon the ear. She had returned, and was sauntering in the shrubbery with some one.

“How uniform are Mrs. Lawson's spirits,” said Adeline, looking up kindly at her companion, whom she longed to cheer. “She seems unacquainted with our English malady, depression.”

“— For which there is no cure, at least if I may judge from my own case,” returned Mr. Fortescue, looking another way as he spoke.

“And may I ask why?” cried Adeline eagerly; “you, who seem to have no object to bestow an anxious thought upon, none to vex nor weary you?”

“ You have hit upon the very reason, Miss Meadows. You have struck the chord. From a boy I have felt that I had no one to care for. I lost my father before I knew the meaning of affection. My mother—”

“ —Your mother ! Go on.”

“ I was told that *she* did not care for me ; that she had turned me over to strangers. So that natural source of affection was denied me.”

“ Then you were left to guardians ? ”

“ You seem to know my history,” Miss Meadows, “ or is it that the shrewdness natural to your sex leads you to guess it.”

“ It is that,” cried Adeline. “ Believe me, all I know about you is surmise !—And I will not distress you, as I see it does, by speaking again on the subject. I will not ask you a single question. I have no right to intrude on your confidence.”

She arose and walked towards the house. Mr. Fortescue did not speak another word, and they met not again until summoned by the dinner-bell to the drawing-room.

A numerous party had assembled. Lady Wentworth and her daughter were in full dress.

Lady Theodora, who understood the science—which no woman should neglect—as little as any one, was disfigured more than usual. Her feathers would stray, her gown would cling; her turban always descended too low; she looked like a lady with whom the winds had made too free; yet the gentlewoman appeared through all this disorder of attire.

“Her son,” thought Adeline, as she followed Lady Theodora into the room, “cannot be proud of her appearance. God grant he may have sense to appreciate her heart!”

Sir Horace, *point device*, with a sky-blue waistcoat, pinkish silk stockings and smart ruffles, stood blushing at his own magnificence as they entered. His fore-finger displayed an onyx ring of the size of a sixpence, and a large pearl brooch with scraps of hair tied in a knot sat upon the effulgence of his shirt frill. For once, Adeline actually heard him, even in the presence of his mamma, laugh. The natural taste of this delicate youth was for low society, and this day his predilections were gratified. For I call not that low only which is certified by station and habits. Lowness applies to the mind generally.

There was a squire of an ancient house living in the neighbourhood, whose portly self and giddy daughters Lady Wentworth thought herself obliged annually to invite; and, like many other disagreeables, Christmas bills, influenzas, chilblains, &c., which come but once a year, she had borne this distressing necessity patiently. Mr. Stowe was a magistrate, and, therefore, a man to respect and know. Unluckily the Miss Stowes had grown up as fast as young ladies always do, like crops of peas. When first Lady Wentworth had known Mr. Stowe they were babies in long frocks; then she had the interest of tracing their progress to sweet darlings in scarlet morocco shoes and long blue sashes; then they went to school; now they had come back to set the hearts of the whole hunt on fire, and to be as merry as the vulgar generally are.

That enviable state which knoweth nothing; too stupid to fear ridicule, too contented with themselves to be aware of superiority, was fully enjoyed by the Miss Stowes. They were dollish without being pretty, and had the accomplishments usual to their time and sphere. Miss Sarah was clever at pastry, preserves,

and clear-starching ; pinked and goffered well, and was a treasure to maiden-aunts. Miss Eliza sang a good song after the manner of Mrs. Billington — in the nightingale style. There *were* people who would rather hear her than Storace.

These two young ladies completely suited Sir Horace's taste, for he felt at his ease with them ; they laughed at everything, and he imitated them. They did not frighten the harmless youth by looking a little too wise — and he liked them very much indeed. Mr. Lawson stood near the young heir to protect him, as it were ; Sir Tufton was seated near his cousin, Millicent. The baronet, although he had arrived some hours before dinner, declined making his appearance before he was finished off. His hair—a touch the greyer of late, was curled and powdered until it rose like the froth of a glass of champagne ; his foot and leg — the most lasting of his charms, —were set off peculiarly by a modish shoe and stocking. The hand which held his snuff-box on his knee was white as the high and antique blood of the Tyrawleys entitled it to be. He was in very good spirits — remarkably good

spirits, as Adeline soon perceived. She *was* amused that she who was somebody in Sir Tufton's eyes at Northington, was no one at Coughton House. As she had spoken of knowing him to Mrs. Lawson, it would have been respectful, and even agreeable, if Sir Tufton had recognized her among his fine relations. But no, Sir Tufton merely bowed, generally, and then resumed his laughing discourse with Mrs. Lawson. He had travelled to Coughton House (such was his littleness of character) on purpose to show his indifference to Miss Meadows; to vex her, if he could, and, in spite of her contumacy, he believed that he could. There is a something at the bottom of man's heart which makes him always flatter himself — even when he is refused — that he has the power to wound.

Sir Tufton was, therefore, quite absorbed with his cousin. Every joke she uttered was in his phrase, "excellent!" The Bath acquaintance common to both, were reviewed with running comments; and Millecent, to whom her husband never listened, to whom her mother rarely spoke, encouraged by the baronet, began to think herself quite a wit. Her

good-humour and courtesy conciliated, the meantime, *his* self-love. He complimented his cousin upon the becoming colour of her scarf. She told him, in reply, that the embroidery on his waistcoat was "quite her taste." Inspired by this, Sir Tufton even put the question, whether she approved of his new shoe-buckles? This produced a kindly-meant encomium, and the words in reply, "I am glad you do. There is not another person whose approbation I care for," reached Adeline where she sat.

"You know Sir Tufton, don't you? He's the most charming creature — I used to think him a cross old bachelor — but husbands are crosser" — whispered Mrs. Lawson, as she stood near Adeline in the promenade to dinner.

This was a solemn procession, which might have been performed to the "Dead March in Saul;" Lady Wentworth came last, held at arms length by Mr. Stowe's little finger. Mr. Lawson gracefully took the hand of Lady Theodora. Sir Horace and Miss Stowe tittered arm in arm; and Mr. Fortescue stood by Adeline's side, silent, and somewhat distant in his manner, as she thought.

But then the dinner! What ceremony, and

solemnity! what bowing, and pressing to eat! what profusion, what heat! how little conversation, how much bustle and noise! Those were the days when carving was a science, and when ladies were expected to be scientific in that alone. Every dish present was carveable, and carved; and Lady Wentworth's elbows were upraised to her shoulders, and then depressed, like the piston of a steam-engine; not to eat was an unkindness; not to drink, an affront; and the gentlemen were soon flushed with the capital old Madeira which Lady Wentworth's cellars produced.

Mr. Lawson's cool head, and Sir Tufton's well-seasoned brain, stood the lavish potations manfully; and old Mr. Stowe contented himself with thinking that though this was slow work, they could make amends when the ladies had withdrawn. But poor little Sir Horace, who had been all his lifetime dieted, and taught to be content with wine and water, had little chance of buffeting with the coarse habits of the time. His faculties became confused amid the constant plying of the glass, and the as constant directions of his affectionate mother.

Lady Wentworth liked everything to go her

own way, and *only* her own way; and her dear boy was constantly violating all the minor proprieties of life. He slashed the viands with the mal-address, but without the valour, of a foot-soldier cutting at an enemy for the first time. He did not carve,—but he made an assault upon the beef and mutton; and his mother's eye, which he felt surveyed him, caused him to wax fiercer and fiercer.

“Horace, my dear Horace—my dear boy—you begin at the wrong end of that sirloin,” cried Lady Wentworth meekly. “Sir Horace, we are waiting for goose. My dear—(yes, Sir Tufton, he will be twenty in November,)—grave to Mr. Stowe. Horace, my love, take off the wing, so, first—then—Mr. Lawson will you shew him? You do everything so well.”

There was scarcely a pause in the business of the day until towards the conclusion of the banquet—for such it deserved to be called,—when Mrs. Lawson, thinking that Adeline looked grave, and remarking to Sir Tufton that Mr. Fortescue was a very dull companion to sit by, spoke across the table to her friend.—“I have been asking Sir Tufton about your friends at Northington. He saw Mr. Meadows

at church, looking—come, Sir Tufton, speak for yourself.” Sir Tufton bowed slightly, and endeavoured to turn his dim-looking eyes with a cold indifference on Miss Meadows.

“Mr. Meadows does not appear to have suffered from Miss Meadows’ absence—nor—any one. Mr. Gadsden in his usual happy spirits. How delightful it is,” he added, turning to Mrs. Lawson, “when the clergyman of the place gets up a little love-affair for the benefit of those who want something to talk about. This little animal of a curate—who is about as much worth thinking of as most curates—has yielded to the tender passion which he has been all his life inspiring;—and—but I forgot I was talking in the presence of a Northington lady—I shall commit myself.”

“Miss Meadows is not addicted to gossip,” said the good-natured Millecent,—“but I think there was some one whom you wished, Adeline, to ask about,—a Miss Williams.”

“A remarkably sensible person,” returned Sir Tufton. “A lady of considerable judgment. I always found her conversation so attractive when I had the honour of calling at Mr. Meadows’, that I fear I made my visits too

long for one who has no pretensions to intimacy with the family."

"Then of course you continue to call there now Miss Williams is alone," asked Mrs. Lawson, slyly.

"No, I do not—you know one's own connexions, my dear Mrs. Lawson, and the claims which a county has upon one, render it impossible to be on terms of intimacy with the good people around one," he added in a voice lowered, but not so low that Adeline could not hear him.

"He is mistaken if he thinks he pains me!"—was her calm reflection.—Sir Tufton spoke to her no more during dinner. When she chanced to look at him, he was talking, with somewhat of slackened energy to Mrs. Lawson, or gazing, in a studied attitude of admiration, at the Miss Stowes. Those young ladies were highly flattered; and what with the marked attentions of Sir Horace, and the sarcastic but veiled flattery of Mr. Lawson, they passed a very agreeable day indeed; having, in an interim when Lady Wentworth was deep in a bill for an enclosure with Mr. Stowe, contrived to engage Sir Horace and Mr. Lawson

to a merry-making at Stowe Court on the ensuing day.

When the party separated for the night, Adeline was struck by the peculiar manner of Mr. Fortescue. His hand trembled as he extended it to her—a mark of intimacy unusual in him; and had it not been that the sarcastic glance of Sir Tufton was, she thought, turned to her, Adeline would have said something kind to the pensive young man, in whose supposed distresses she felt a sincere interest; but she was checked by the surmised observation of the baronet.

On the ensuing day—before the breakfast-bell had rung; before Lady Theodora had even finished reading the immense packet of letters brought to her by the postman; before Mr. Lawson had crossed the lawn—and he was always early; and long, long before Mrs. Lawson had shaken the ringlets from her white forehead; whilst yet Sir Tufton mused upon the strange perverseness of whiskers growing grey, or Lady Wentworth had fully formed her schemes for keeping her dear boy out of harm's way, and preventing his going to Stowe Court; ere yet Sir Horace had had his

hair frizzed—Adeline, restless Adeline, was in the hall.

She was crossing it to the music-room, when Mr. Fortescue, who was standing at the door of the hall, came towards her, and earnestly entreated a few minutes' conversation.

“Now,”—thought Adeline, “my suspicions will be confirmed—I shall be his *confidante*.” She trembled with expectation, as she allowed Mr. Fortescue to follow her into the music-room, and there they both stood, looking as much abashed as the guiltiest of mortals could do.

Adeline spoke first—she longed to set the mind of Mr. Fortescue at ease.

“I know,” she said, kindly, “all that is passing in your mind. Do not confide in me unless you are certain it will be for the best—that it will secure the happiness of two people. You hesitate—ah! let me entreat you to pause—to write to me if you cannot explain your sentiments in words.”

She looked up in Mr. Fortescue's face as she spoke. The handsome countenance of the young man was suffused with blushes.

In his eyes she read an expression which troubled her.

“Can I be mistaken in you? I have guessed your feelings—I have, indeed,” she added, colouring with the zeal of friendship as she spoke.

“Just as they now are, they will ever be,” replied Mr. Fortescue, with much emotion; and, pressing her hand between both of his, he added, in a few minutes afterwards, “Do not misjudge me!—think of me leniently—kindly—in my absence,—and teach others to do so. I go happy, since my return will be under circumstances very different: I can, blessed as I am, wait until that happy moment.”

“Then,” cried Adeline, in some confusion, for she could not but fancy that the feelings of the son were mingled with other emotions, “farewell! the shortest partings are ever the kindest,—farewell!”

He was preparing to reply, when Adeline again checked him, for at that instant a door was opened, and Mr. Lawson walked quietly into the room.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Would we attain the happiest state
That is design'd us here,
No joy a rapture must create,
No grief beget despair.
No injury fierce anger raise,
No honour tempt to pride ;
No vain desires of empty praise,
Must in the soul abide.”

Old Song by the COUNTESS OF WINCHILSEA.

Mr. Meadows instantly waved his hand to check it. "Is he here, looking in at *our* gates? walking over our fields? I will teach him better manners, the low fellow."

"Learn them yourself, and curb your expressions, Loftus. Mr. Floyer has insulted us, but the term 'low fellow' is not to be employed to any of the gentry, Loftus. He is a very artful, a very profligate young man!" exclaimed Mr. Meadows, pausing to gather up carefully a work-basket of Adeline's, which he had upset in rising. "Poor Adeline!" he sighed, as he replaced the little cards of silk one by one in the basket. "Miss Williams, my dear," for to this style Mr. Meadows had of late arrived, "just run after Loftus — he's gone into the office—and say I am not displeased with him. It won't do to quarrel with both my children," added the father, sitting down, and looking wistfully into the garden.

Louisa returned out of breath. "I caught dear Loftus just as he was going out at the gate, and he was a little hurt; never mind, boys will be boys, and—dearest Loftus! he's such a spirited, generous, noble creature!"

"It won't do to let parents into the faults

of their children," thought Miss Williams, as she took up a little whisk, and began brushing up the few crumbs that had fallen upon the neat piece of green baize which protected the Turkey carpet.

"Don't trouble yourself—don't do that, my dear," said Mr. Meadows, starting from his reverie. The operation soothed him, nevertheless, for it had been omitted since the death of Mrs. Meadows, or had been left, as her household duties were, to servants, who had had almost sinecures during her existence.

"Oh, I like it, sir—it's done," cried the active Louisa, bustling about, and setting the chairs right. "I am vastly fond of a neat room myself, and can I be too useful to you, who are so very, very kind, and who afford me your protection?" Mr. Meadows stared a little. "But I'm vexed to see you troubled and disturbed about your children," Louisa hastened to say. "It is true, dear Loftus is high; 'tis such a pity, now, he offends the clients as he does, and lords it over Mr. Brooksbank; but then he's so excessively clever, and so genteel—dear, handsome, naughty Loftus. I do love him, though I'm

quite ashamed of myself for being so fond of him. — Were your shirt-frills plaited as you liked, last night, sir?" asked Louisa, as she took up a large white cravat, one of those volumes of jaconot in which our worthy sires were mummified, and began hemming away very scientifically.

"I think they were," replied Mr. Meadows, arranging mechanically, and with an absent air, the hedge-rows of French cambric which stood out underneath his chin. "By the by, I've forgotten to put my brooch on — never mind, don't stir — don't fetch it, my dear."

"Oh, dear sir," cried Louisa, blushing, "I was only going to ask Susan to see for it, as I know — I know," she added, with a look of still deeper confusion, "you so greatly value that brooch." There was something so mournful in Louisa's voice that Mr. Meadows, turning round, repressed the exclamation "true!" which he was going to utter. The said brooch was a pear-shaped article, very solid and thick, crystal upon gold, with a profusion of light flaxen hair interwoven basket-fashion inside it, the che-

rished relic of a departed wife's earliest gift. "—I had it when I was first articled; so long ago as that," said Mr. Meadows, unable to resist a recurrence to the days of his youth, and to the coquetry of referring to a first attachment. "Never mind it now!" he added in a high key, seeing that Miss Williams was again about to fly off for the treasure, "sit down. I have weightier matters to think of." He sat in a deep reverie for some time. "Loftus wishes to be independent of me, that you know, and I have a painful conviction, Miss Williams, a sort of presage, that poor Adeline will, in time, fall into the snares of that accursed—let me not utter that for which I rebuked poor Loftus.—If my children leave me desolate, if—" he was proceeding cautiously and calmly with that most important of all the parts of speech, on which so many destinies have hinged, when the door was suddenly opened, and with the words, "Please sir, Parson Gadsden," the Curate was, at this early hour, ushered into the room.

Miss Williams could scarcely bring her mind to receive him civilly. This was the third time that Mr. Meadows had nearly come

to confession. Once the dinner-bell had disturbed the progress of his ideas ; another time Mr. Brooksbank had called him out into the office, and now !—But Louisa felt it the more that it was Sally that had shewn the parson in ; and Sally, she felt some suspicions, was her enemy, or what came nearly to the same thing, the worshiper of the shade of the late Mrs. Meadows.

But long years of subservience had taught Miss Williams self-control, and she turned to welcome the Curate, whom she could have driven out of the room, with a kind smile.

“You’re not ill ? nothing the matter, I hope?—I do hope your sprain is not worse—nor those terrible nervous head-aches you’re subject to—nor that rheumatic pain you described to Miss Harris and me, last week ?” asked Louisa, with all due anxiety, knowing that Mr. Gadsden, like most bachelor clergymen, was a little hypochondriac, and worked upon the sympathies of his lady-admirers by many interesting maladies.

“Something has really disturbed you ?” cried Louisa, struck by an unusual confusion

in the costume of the Curate ; his white tie was a hundredth part of an inch out of its place ; the powder had fallen like drifted snow on his collar, there was a discrepancy in his shoes, and one of his gloves wanted mending.

The Curate was touched by this solicitude, for he had a tender little heart ; but presently, like a child who has once done something naughty and is penitent, he drew back, moved his chair away from Miss Williams, and addressed his whole attention to Mr. Meadows. Too soft and gentle, Mr. Gadsden had now, again, been, for the one-and-twentieth time, misunderstood.

“ I did wish to speak to you, sir, in the office,”—Mr. Gadsden began ; he took out his handkerchief and was much agitated ;—“ but, if you’ll excuse me, though I come on professional business, I would rather Mr. Loftus and your clerk shouldn’t hear my little personal explanations.”

“ Proceed, sir, if you please,” replied Mr. Meadows, turning full round, and looking, as he always did, intently upon the face of the client who addressed him.

“ You are aware, Mr. Meadows,” Mr. Gads-

den began, "of my situation in the parish, and how very important it is for a man who has the eyes of the parish upon him, to be circumspect, and" —

"—You must be aware of that, sir," returned the solicitor, gravely.

Mr. Gadsden proceeded. "No lady can say, I am sure, that I have behaved ungentlemanly" — he looked at Miss Williams for sympathy — "but there are persons who do so take advantage of one's situation. It has come like a clap of thunder upon me, Mr. Meadows."

"Let me understand," said the lawyer, with a professional air, "any delicate dilemma, Mr. Gadsden?"

"A very delicate dilemma, Mr. Meadows,— a very delicate one indeed. Would you believe it, Miss Williams, that whilst I have been attending the schools, hearing the catechism in Lent, and visiting my people, I have ('tis so said) been setting families by the ears, and engaging underhand the affections of Miss Susan Haines? Mr. Meadows, I am threatened with a breach of promise of marriage!"

The Curate stopped short, for Miss Williams burst into an obstreperous fit of laughter. She recovered herself in time to say "Shameful!" and to hold up her hands—for Mr. Meadows did not like matters of business to be made matters of merriment.

"I declare I shake like an aspen-leaf," pursued Mr. Gadsden, in a tone of deep melancholy.

"No wonder," returned Mr. Meadows. "Well, sir, what evidence have they?"

"None, sir, except such casual attentions as any gentleman must pay—the offer of an umbrella at the school—Miss Susan always came when it rained, then I walked home with her to bring it back—I gave Miss Susan my charity sermon to read—I believe I may have held her pattens for her on Saints'-days!" He clasped his hands together. "Even my very looks at church! But no matter—no matter; we learn by experience. Would you, Mr. Meadows, would you, Miss Williams, have expected that any young lady could have turned round and injured me so, only because I have walked home with her once or twice from Mr. Blake's, or held the lan-

tern across the puddles, or pulled the yard-bell, or protected her against the dog? 'Tis a cruel injustice."

"Abominable!" said Miss Williams: "and those frightful Haineses; besides, it would be lowering yourself even to think of them, Mr. Gadsden."

"'Tis almost dangerous even to think," said Mr. Meadows, thoughtfully: "but, sir, the documentary evidence—"

"I deny them to produce it, sir," cried the injured Curate, rising on his toes, with dignity. "I'll clear my character—that I will, and then—I will quit the parish. But where, where to go, I really can't tell—I really don't know."

"I will leave you and Mr. Meadows to discuss the matter," said Miss Williams, rising, and tripping to the door. "Mr. Gadsden, you have my heartfelt sympathy—artful, vain, low-bred, flippant girls!"

She closed the door, and ran off up the lane to chatter with the Miss Haineses, to hear how it had all happened;—when brother Tom had been worked up to threaten the Curate with a caning; how Mrs. Haines had cried, Mr.

Haines had blustered; and to read over a certain letter, shewn round to all the kinsfolk and friends of the Haineses; containing, indeed, an express offer, and addressed, outside, to "Miss Susan Haines," but having no signature, although evidently written in Mr. Gadsden's minute text.

All Northington was in commotion: the butcher's boy was parleying at Mr. Gadsden's gate with the worthy woman who managed his small domestic matters; the lad who acted as the Curate's valet was an unusual time within the grocer's shop, where he had only gone to buy a quarter of a pound of coffee, but where he was catechised and cross-catechised by the grocer's wife; a girl's school coming down the lane were in full chatter upon the subject, as the predestined Mr. Gadsden, flushed and anxious, after a long parley, and sustaining a stern interrogatory from Mr. Meadows, walked meekly along the causeway, which but yesterday he had trodden elate with pride. It was Friday — the next day was Saturday — the third — he read it on the japanned card-rack, which was nailed near his mantel-piece — was Sunday — he knew

not how he should face his parishioners. The last Sunday, Miss Susan had been sustained, fainting, all down the middle aisle, out of the church,—and if she chose to play the same game next Sunday, the Curate felt certain that he should faint also. And then!—he dared not pursue the train of his ideas. It made him too nervous — and he had not written his sermon.

Unhappy man! There was hardly a text that he looked upon that night, that did not seem applicable to his own situation—that did not even point to his character. He could not stand it. On the following morning the Wolstone coach passed early: and whilst Northington slept—ere Susan had awoke to her woes, the grocer's wife to her inquiries, the girl's school to the remembrance of the French vocabulary, and Miss Williams to all the hopes and schemes which day brought to *her* fancy, Mr. Gadsden had quitted Northington — not for ever — that would be ruinous — even a week was expensive — but for a little change on account of his nervous depression.

On the following Sunday, — instead of the gentle tones, delicate, interesting cough of the

dangerous Mr. Gadsden, — was heard in the sacred edifice, a burly voice; and a portly gentleman, six feet high and of proportionate circumference, rose in the place of the small preacher. The Miss Haineses were at church—Miss Susan in tears, of course. What tears had not womankind shed for Mr. Gadsden? But the younger sisters braved it out, laughing loud in the porch, and giggling in the churchyard, Mrs. Haines all the while begging her graver friends to look over the high spirits of Maria, and to pardon the childish hilarity of her juvenile Bessie.

But Miss Williams was interested in another quarter. Within the enclosure of Lady Theodora's pew — between the half-withdrawn red curtain, there rose such a head as had not been seen in Northington for a long time;—one of those models for a painter, which one would gladly associate with every virtue, and endow with every intellectual accomplishment. Alas! the darkly-shrouded eye, which was lowered as if in meditation, was averted from creditors and foes; the heart that throbbed beneath the fine form, beat not with one devo-

tional sentiment: the reverential deportment of Stanhope Floyer — for *he* was the unknown — was the effect of habit, of good-breeding, — not of religious awe.

“ I do not wonder at Adeline’s predilection,” mused Louisa, as she watched the young stranger, and marked the noble brow, the high-bred deportment, the smile, full of sweetness, the careless courtesy of one who, coming amongst his inferiors degraded and impoverished, had still the grace not to look morose, and the tact not to assume haughtiness. Once, and once only, Miss Williams, narrowly observing Mr. Floyer, saw him glance towards Mr. Meadows’ pew; and the eye which coldly surveyed Mr. Meadows, rested with some curiosity on Loftus, who, with face upraised, and holding with ostentatious piety a large red psalter aloft, was uttering his responses with a sonorous voice.

“ I am half in love with him myself,” thought Louisa, as she walked arm-in-arm down the village. Then, as if reproving her own thoughts, she said to Mr. Meadows: “ Dear sir, what a fine, but what a very ungenteel-

looking young man Mr. Stanhope Floyer is — so unlike the gentleman — at least in my poor opinion.”

“ And yet, and yet, my dear,” answered Mr. Meadows, opening the door, and walking into the house, round by the shrubbery, “ my poor deluded girl can see so much in *him*, that she can see nothing in anyone else, — I have been a good deal discomposed. Mr. Gadsden tells me that young Burroughs, who was a schoolfellow of his — is doing a great deal of business at Ardham, at the new baths there. Just think what a capital match it would have been for Adeline, with her means, and his — he attends the very family she is visiting ! ”

“ I don't know, sir,” replied Louisa, remembering that the match was a particular day-dream of the late Mrs. Meadows, and not wishing to revive those reminiscences : “ I don't know, sir, that it is exactly the sort of thing you would desire for Adeline — times are altered, sir. Mr. Meadows is looked on as one of the principal gentlemen hereabouts, I take it ” —

“ Ah, my dear ! if I could but see her happy ! ”

replied the father, wistfully. He paced round and round the gravel-walk, Louisa on his arm, both looking very like man and wife, the old servants peeping out upon them from the kitchen windows, until tea was ready; and Miss Williams then went in to see that all was comfortable and prepared, and to place a volume of Tillotson's Sermons, over which Mr. Meadows took his evening's sleep, near the worthy man's chair.

Meantime gaieties, of which the quiet people of Northington little dreamed, were going on within the higher sphere, in which Lady Theodora and Adeline played their parts.

It has long been considered in our country a duty to dance the old year out, — and the new year in; — as if the English were so remarkably fond of dancing, so constitutionally merry that every epoch must be marked by a fling or a caper: and as the town of Ardham, in the days of which I speak, was the scene of gaiety, it was thought incumbent on the county families to get up a county ball on the thirty-first of December, 1788.

Many years had elapsed since Lady Wentworth had shewn herself at the Ardham as-

sembly ; but Horace was growing up, at least he ought to be growing up, and an election was coming on in the course of the next year. She invited Mr. and the Miss Stowes ; recommended Lady Theodora to have her diamonds cleaned ; ordered Sir Tufton to stay ; presented Mrs. Lawson with a new dress, and gave it out that Lady Wentworth was going to grace the Ardham ball.

“ Pleasure — pleasure,” said Sir Tufton, scornfully, to Lady Theodora, as he stood with her ladyship at the drawing-room fire, dressed, ready to set out for Ardham, “ pleasure has different meanings in this world. ’Tis Lady Wentworth’s pleasure to leave her blazing fires and well-lighted rooms, to travel ten miles without a moon, in a cold night, in thin shoes, with bare heads,” he stirred the fire as he spoke, “ shivering by torch-light, to arrive at — what? — at the Roebuck Inn, Ardham ; to pass through the passages, smelling of tobacco, into a dingy room, cold as Iceland, stuck over with wax candles ; the king’s arms at one end, a quartette of fiddles at the other,—the boasted assembly-room at Ardham. And who but Lady Wentworth,” he whis-

pered, "would have thought of taking Lawson to a ball, resuscitating the Master of the Ceremonies, and bringing back his old habit of bowing, and—here he comes!"

Mr. Lawson, dressed with inimitable skill, even with costliness, yet walking with the careless grace of his daily demeanour, drew near to offer Lady Theodora his arm.

"The carriages are ready," he said, bowing, and in an instant he and Lady Theodora vanished.

There was no one but Adeline in the room; and Sir Tufton had so alternately slighted and watched her, had been so often verging on rudeness, that Adeline expected that he would not proffer the usual courtesy. Sir Tufton looked, indeed, to the right and to the left, as if awaiting a rescue; and then, seeing there was no help for it, he extended his hand to touch the forefinger of Miss Meadows.

"Any news from Northington?"—his usual question, as if she knew nobody except at Northington—"Mr. Gadsden quite well? I dare say you hear all the news from that quarter?"

“ I ? ” replied Adeline. “ No, indeed. I hear but little from Northington : my father seldom writes to me.”

“ But your brother, Mr. Loftus, is a charming correspondent, no doubt. Now suppose you should see any of the Northington people at the ball to-night ; would it agitate you very much ? ” Sir Tufton spoke with a sort of polite contempt, if it may be so called, more grating than downright insolence. But Adeline, wisely and timidly, for her wisdom consisted in her gentleness, received it as though she perceived it not.

“ I should be very glad to see Mr. Gadsden,” she began, meekly.

“ Should you, indeed ? He’s a contemptible little fellow ! ”

Sir Tufton spoke with a degree of petulance which could not be endured, therefore, Adeline did not reply ; but a smile played upon her countenance at the reflection of the errors into which Sir Tufton was falling with respect to the true channel of her affections.

Poor Sir Tufton ! he could neither forgive her, nor leave her alone ; and though Mrs. Lawson was calling to him to come into her

vis-à-vis, and though it was quite vulgar to drive three in a chariot, he got into Lady Theodora's chariot, and seated himself next to Miss Meadows. Wherefore she knew not, save to be captious, satirical, and overbearing all the way.

But a great deal was passing in the widower's little mind, as his own disclosures revealed.

“ I rode into Ardham, yesterday, Lady Theodora. I wanted to ask Burroughs, the man there whom Lady Wentworth patronises, whether I must turn my groom away. The fellow's lungs are unsound. When, lo! forth steps out of the shop that lady-killer, Mr. Gadsden,—one of the most invincible of men, is he not, Miss Meadows?—The parson had the presumption to introduce his friend, Mr. Burroughs, to me.”

“ I thought you knew him,” said Lady Theodora.

“ In his way—he 's all very well in his *line*,” replied Sir Tufton, emphatically, glancing to see if Adeline's colour rose, for the small-minded baronet was not ignorant that this same Mr. Burroughs was one of Mr. Meadows'

acquaintance; as the young man, just beginning business at Ardham, had taken good care to announce.

At last the carriages reached the scene of the tea and card assembly at Ardham. A huge stag's head and horns, with "Mary Sadler, Roebuck," in gilt letters on a blue board underneath, and "Neat Post-chaises," inscribed by way of parenthesis over the inn bow-window, disclosed the rendezvous of the great in those unfastidious days. Wealth had not then built her assembly-rooms, blazing with chandeliers, and teeming with luxuries, in provincial watering-places. Suppers were unheard of; and tea, at so much a-head, contented the dowagers who have now dropped into their graves, not the worse for not knowing the delights of Roman punch. The landlady and her myrmidons curtseying at the inn-door; — a large fire in the bar; — the ringing of hostlers' bells, and the animating scraping and tuning of fiddles above-stairs, together with the frequent sounds of "Your ladyship," "Her ladyship," "My lady,"—nay, the obsolete sounds of "Your honour," gave a semblance of homely hospitality to the reception

of Mary Sadler, and made the great feel more great. Then, what beating hearts there were as the wide, old-fashioned stair-case was mounted; and Lady Wentworth's party, forming into a cavalcade, entered the assembly-room!

It was too select to be full; and unluckily, as it was remarked, the doors which divided the ball-room half-way were thrown wide open; usually, they separated it into two rooms, where farmers had their ordinary, and the commercial club met; for Ardham was a borough of some importance.

Lady Wentworth sailed up instantly to the top of the room; her party followed her. She bowed, as she went, to the Mayor of Ardham and his wife, then to her solicitor; and then curtsied more familiarly to one or two families of her own rank, who had taken a day's journey to travel to the Ardham assembly.

"Sir Horace, as steward," whispered Sir Tufton to Lady Theodora, "has only to apply to Lawson to set him right."

Poor Sir Horace! in what an agony of fidget he prepared to open the ball! How the Miss Stowes tittered! and how awfully his mother's eyes were fixed upon him! At a

given signal a minuet was played, — at Lady Wentworth's request, though it was out of fashion, yet she chose that in her time it should not be quite abolished—and Mr. Lawson led Adeline, and Sir Horace his sister, to the grave encounter.

Just after the first responsive steps had commenced, a well-known voice fell on Adeline's ear. She dared not look round for some moments; when she did, it was to see Mr. Gadsden fairly hemmed in between the Miss Stowes, who had just been introduced to him; and no sooner was she disentangled than the Curate, drawing on a very neat pair of gloves, came forward to console her for the delay.

“Your papa is quite well, Miss Meadows, I assure you.” He sighed, and added, “There's a great deal happened in Northington since you left. Mr. Simmons from the Free School did duty for me last Sunday. It was very kind of him, very; and I am afraid he must be so kind as to do it again, for I feel the change quite beneficial to my health and spirits. No, no; as I say to my friend Burroughs here, I can't run away from Ardham yet — it's a very sociable place, and remarkably good society in it.”

“It’s as well,” thought the Curate, “not to be seen talking too long to one person at once. — Let me introduce my friend Mr. Burroughs to you. You’ll find him,” he whispered, “a remarkably genteel young man.”

Mr. Burroughs bowed, but did not retreat, like Mr. Gadsden. On the contrary, as Adeline retired to a row of benches — with which even dowagers in those days were content — he followed her, and became one of the *coterie* which stood near Miss Meadows; Sir Tufton shrinking back from the touch of his coat-sleeve, as if he feared the plague.

Mr. Burroughs was a remarkably easy man; he got into conversation directly. Without remorse he pursued a theme independent of the slightest consideration of whether it would be agreeable or not. He was a young man making his way at Ardham, and he justly conceived it would be a capital thing for him to have a friend at court — that is, at Coughton House, — which was much the same thing as St. James’s in the eyes of a practitioner who had just stepped into a practice at Ardham.

“Your father wears remarkably well, Miss

Meadows! I am happy to hear he is very little altered since I visited Northington. You don't remember that. You were at school, but I saw your needle-work, and your drawing; you need not be ashamed of either:— that you need not."

"How silly it is of me to mind Sir Tufton's looks," thought Adeline. Sir Tufton seldom honoured her directly with a glance; but now his hazel eyes, brighter than usual, were fixed spitefully upon her.

"Miss Meadows is going to dance, sir," said Lady Theodora, somewhat loftily to Mr. Burroughs, as if to remind him to keep his distance.

"Then I hope I shall have the honour to— no lady need ever sit down while I am not engaged. No, that's not fair, is it? I call it bad manners." Mr. Burroughs drew close up to Adeline's side as he spoke.

Adeline reflected for a moment. Hers was a mind of far stronger mould than her quiet, pensive manners indicated. She considered that by any appearance of slighting her father's friend, she should slight her father. "He *has*

a right to ask me," she said to herself, "and he is a partner suitable to my station."

As she rose to give Mr. Burroughs her hand, Sir Tufton could not support the degradation. He followed her hastily, and whispered, "Surely you are not going to dance with that man?"

Adeline bowed calmly, and replied—disengaging herself for a moment from the officious Mr. Burroughs—

"I will never inflict upon others the contumely which I have myself felt towards those of my own station." She coloured deeply as she made this effort.

"Piqued," said Sir Tufton to himself, as he watched her, beautiful and modest as she was, and fitted for any sphere, stand up in a *cotillon*—piqued; "and his spirits rose remarkably."

"Now it's very odd—it's very odd we two should be standing here. There's something very singular in *our* being coupled together," said Mr. Burroughs, as he performed an *assemblée* opposite to Miss Meadows, "I am sure I am quite ashamed of myself for not knowing

you when you came in ; but young ladies grow out of one's remembrance."

Mr. Gadsden at this moment crept up behind Adeline, and whispered, " I am so sorry, Miss Meadows, I couldn't dance with you this dance ; you must have thought it so odd my not asking you, but Mr. Stowe has been so particularly polite and kind."

" Oh, don't mention it," cried Adeline, turning to *balancer*.

" She's hurt, I am sure," said Mr. Gadsden, retiring, confidentially, to Miss Stowe.

Beaux were scarce, and the two young ladies had seized hold of him, each by one arm ; for Sir Horace had been forbidden by his mother to have anything to say to those young ladies ; but he had cheated his affectionate parent by engaging one of the two for the supper-dance.

" Capital neighbourhood this for practice," said Mr. Burroughs to Adeline, as the dance closed—" though I'm not fond of country-practice myself, having once practised in London, but only as assistant. We won't talk about those days now. We are doing very well. Now let me advise you to dilute freely. The

fluids are exhausted — there's tea in an inner-room; and, Lady The, — Lady The, do you call her? — is there."

"Then I will go to her ladyship," said Adeline, waiting a moment to see the *début* of Sir Horace in a country-dance. The figure was only hands across, and *poussette*; but he had been obliged to walk it over first, by Lady Wentworth's advice — then he had set off — but was perpetually getting into change sides and back again; and putting the old stagers in country-dances out of their way.

"Never mind," said Mr. Stowe to the alarmed and disappointed mother — "he enjoys it all the more."

"Ah, Mr. Stowe!" replied Lady Wentworth, who was anxious for the sake of the election, and the honour of the family, to make the best of her son — "when a young man's head is full of Greek and Latin, you know—"

"True, and Mr. Lawson dances well enough for the whole party" — was stupid Mr. Stowe's good-natured reply.

"There's been quite a little scene in the tea-room," cried Sir Tufton, coming in breath-

less, pale, and spiteful. "It has been an evening of recognizances, Mrs. Lawson, for your friend Miss Meadows. First she meets her old flame, Mr. Gadsden; next, Mr. Burrough, or Burroughs; and now she has just encountered Stanhope Floyer."

"Indeed!" cried Millecent, "what will old Mr. Meadows say?"

"How, — why, — what?" faltered Sir Tufton, in veritable anguish of soul.

"Never mind; hush!" said the good-natured Mrs. Lawson, "don't talk of it to her; it's a sad and a serious subject."

She spoke with emphasis; and the sight of Adeline, entering from the tea-room, leaning upon Stanhope Floyer's arm — now walking here, now standing anywhere — in the very heat of the fire; — in the very draught of the door, — so that they, the lovers, might speak unnoticed, as they thought; — the happiness of two devoted persons, the perfect, though brief, happiness of the unfortunate Adeline, grated upon Sir Tufton's nerves very much. He began to have a sick head-ache.

All the rest of the evening — how short it seemed to Adeline! How the hours flew!

How, when she raised her eyes to the countenance of her very handsome and graceful admirer, she felt that there was no one else worth looking at but him — that all faces were insipid — all conversation worthless — save his; and yet, in what did that conversation consist?

CHAPTER XIII.

“ How deep the sigh that rends the heart,
Which breaking still its hopes conceal !
How keen the pang when lovers part,
And dare not, must not love reveal !
O let these faltering accents tell,
That breathe a long, a last farewell !”

Pocock.

“ I NEVER shall forget your first meeting,”

said Lady Theodora to Adeline as they sat

Adeline's hand in hers, and looked affectionately at her, Adeline felt, with some poignancy, what a mother's love must be.

I have seen in some young minds, much suffering from fruitless yearning for that maternal care and sympathy which it is in woman's nature to give and to receive. School-days—the cold precision of an auntly rule—the indifference of stepmothers—the preference which the fond and proud mother unconsciously shews for her own offspring—how they quicken the tender remembrance of an absent or lost mother! What life and influence they give to the dimly-recalled image of one just known to be withdrawn!

The tears started into Adeline's eyes.

“My nephew is a happy man,” observed Lady Theodora, judging that her feelings were so intense as to be expressed only by weeping, “and—”

“But it was not Mr. Floyer for whom I felt at that moment,” replied Adeline:—“your goodness, your sympathy, my dear Lady Theodora;—let us say no more of it—my own dear mother could not have comforted me more than you have done.”

“But you are still resolved?” asked Lady Theodora—“you have taken a final leave of Stanhope?”

“Dear Lady Theodora, I have promised my father, let me hope for the best. If Stanhope—if Stanhope does not forget me!”

“Ah!” cried Lady Theodora, “there is the mischief. What certain ruin to a man’s character is an early disappointment! Stanhope has been a *little* gay. He might be wholly reclaimed by an early and happy marriage; whereas by driving him, as it were, into dissipation as a resource—however, dear, don’t think about it—don’t dwell on what I have said. Provided Stanhope does not fall into the hands of any designing woman, who is captivated by his very great beauty of person, I think he will never cease to cherish your image.”

With what a good intention Lady Theodora spoke! but as usual, without in the least looking into the mind of her whom she addressed. For in a mind like Adeline’s, diffident, reserved, enthusiastic, jealousy is a plant of indigenous growth; and jealousy is not the less torturing because it may be often unreasonable, sometimes even indefinite.

She pondered for some moments,—ashamed of her own thoughts,—on what Lady Theodora had uttered, and then said, “Dear Lady Theodora, do tell me of *what* have I to be afraid? My father hinted something—but oh! I could not,—I could not ask him to explain himself. For months I have pondered on those hints. I have wondered whether he whom I so entirely love, can ever degrade himself and me by—by—there is a great deal of wickedness in the world, is there not?”

Lady Theodora hastened to repair the error she had made,—to soothe the pangs she had occasioned; pangs the more severe that they were endured in secret, for already—already Adeline felt the opprobrium, adding bitterness to pain, of being thought jealous.

“You have no reason, my dear child, to doubt Stanhope’s honour and constancy. He has sought the interview of to-night, and he goes away, binding himself, leaving you free; can anything be more honourable?”

“I believe,” said Adeline, “that he loves me now, but—”

“Mr. Meadows has, indeed, a great deal to answer for,” interrupted Lady Theodora,

“cold, heartless, mercenary,—to sever two young persons exactly suited to each other! And are you really,—really resolved, Adeline, to go home to-morrow?”

“I must, indeed, Lady Theodora. I cannot avoid seeing Stanhope if I stay here, and I am breaking my word if I do see him. Do not let him think, if you talk to him of me, that it is no sacrifice to me,—don’t let him call me cold, as he did last night. Oh, Lady Theodora, I am not cold! Teach him to know me better—oh! foster the affection you think he has for me. It will be the only—the only comfort I can have to fancy that you and he are talking of me together—and you *will* write?”

“Daily, hourly,” cried Lady Theodora, struck by a burst of enthusiasm in the timid, delicate Adeline; “you shall hear of every sigh he breathes—you shall know every dream he dreams.”

“Tell him, when you speak of me,” pursued Adeline, “that I value his preference far more than the wealth he regrets—oh, far—far more! Once I used to think of station and fortune, and mingle up those notions in my dreams of future happiness. That is all at an end—for ever at an end now.”

“ You are my own dear friend ! ” replied Lady Theodora, “ how I should have liked you for my son’s wife, for poor Eustace ! ”

Adeline started ; and the recollection of her last interview with Mr. Fortescue gave her pain.

“ Well, Adeline,” continued Lady Theodora, “ you will walk up to the cottage, I hope ; tell my people there I shall be at home in a fortnight. February will soon be here.”

“ Yes, and your son too,” said Adeline, as she kissed Lady Theodora, and bade her a reluctant good night.

“ And so it really does amount to *that* ! And she really is under an engagement to run away from him,” said Sir Tufton to Mrs. Lawson, when she disclosed to him Adeline’s projected flight from Coughton. “ Well, under existing circumstances, and as she has chosen a gentleman to fall in love with, I will ride by her carriage the first stage.”

“ Vastly condescending, cousin,” cried Mrs. Lawson.

“ Where is Lawson ? Where’s Horace ? ” asked Sir Tufton. “ Oh, I remember ! gone to meet Stanhope Floyer at the hunt ; so he can

hunt, though he's so very much in despair! His malady assumes an active form of the disease."

Mrs. Lawson always laughed at Sir Tufton's jokes, and he always laughed at them himself. He was not sorry to be found in this very cheerful state of spirits by Adeline, who came to bid Mrs. Lawson farewell. The sweetness and openness of Millecent's character had won Adeline's regard.

"I dare not press you to come to Northington," she said, "for, perhaps, Lady Wentworth—"

"Why, mamma's rather particular and queer," returned Mrs. Lawson; "but we are sure to see *you*, for Stanhope and Lawson are so remarkably intimate."

Adeline knew not why, but her mind misgave her at this intelligence. Stanhope Floyer had assured her they were *not* intimate.

"That," she said, gravely, and braving for once the direct gaze of Sir Tufton, "will not ensure my coming. Will you write to me?"

"Indeed I will. Horace! Miss Meadows is going to Northington; and neither you, nor Lawson, nor Stanhope Floyer, nor any of the

gentlemen have the grace to escort her! She's obliged to take up with Mrs. Gundry and Peter."

"I shall ride by Miss Meadows the whole way—that is if I am allowed," said Sir Tufton, with great gallantry; "and I shall expect Mr. Meadows' thanks for it."

"I believe," replied Adeline, "my father would be very much obliged to you; with regard to myself, I shall be equally grateful."

"What does she mean by this cool acceptance of my offer?" thought Sir Tufton, almost more offended than if she had refused him.

But the day waned away, and there was no time to take offence. The distance was only thirty miles; and with four post-horses, lamps in the carriage, and boasted turnpike-roads, there was no fear of danger even if they did not reach Northington before it was quite dark.

"My father," thought Adeline, "will be satisfied, that having permitted Sir Tufton and his servants to ride beside us, I could not have any hope of encountering Mr. Floyer, for alas! my father suspects almost every look."

She descended the hill which slopes from Fir Cliff; the river was now partially hidden in the course by the budding of the early trees; the catkins of the willow were in flower, distinct beside the rippling stream. Young lambkins sported in the meadows, and here and there a knoll, whitened by patches of primroses, caught the eye. Beautiful spring! who can spend thy gay hours in crowded cities, and hope to be forgiven!

The journey seemed short to Adeline, shorter almost than she wished it; for she was revolving all that had happened at Coughton. Her brief interview with Mr. Floyer had been devoted to renewed assurances of constancy and affection on his part; they had been satisfactory even to the enamoured Adeline. But there was an excitement of manner, a recklessness of speech, a something unguarded — almost libertine — in his deportment which filled her with anxiety. Could these new appearances be the result of an interval of dissipation and folly — or were they chargeable upon that unhappiness of which Mr. Floyer spoke so feelingly? She could not resolve the question; but Lady

Theodora's remark, "Stanhope Floyer would be saved by an early marriage," rang in her ears.

The first misery of an ill-placed attachment, want of confidence,—and it may be called the hydra of domestic evils,—took away all the enjoyment of those fond recollections which the recent expression of an ardent attachment supplies. Sir Tufton, riding assiduously now and then up to the carriage-window, was struck by the melancholy of Adeline's countenance, and he felt—for he was a kind-hearted man when his pride was not piqued—the greater concern for her that he was conscious he had lately been a little malicious. When day declined, he renewed his close attendance, until the lights of many windows denoted that the carriage and its satellites had reached the village of Northington. The chariot stopped at the green gates; Sir Tufton alighted to hand Miss Meadows out of it; and then, without attempting to intrude upon the privacy of her home, remounted his horse, and rode off to Tyrawley Court.

"Is James ill?" inquired Adeline, seeing that the cook, slip-shod, and all untidiness

and wonderment, came to the gate. "How is my father?" she asked, without waiting for an answer to the first question. "Mrs. Gundry and Peter are gone to Lady Theodora's," seeing that the amazed domestic still held a flaring candle up to her face, and stared.

"Bless you, ma'am! I thought it was my master and Miss —. Didn't you hear the bells a-ringing as you came along?"

"No—yes; where is Sally? and where are they sitting to-night?"

Adeline moved into the hall; it was dark and cold.

"There's a fire here," said the servant, opening the breakfast-parlour door. "I thought they would be home to-night." "Sally," she added in a mysterious whisper, "giv warning. So missis discharged her immediately. James has gone along with master. Bless me, there's another ring at the gate!" And away flew the honest woman, leaving Adeline to her reflections.

Poor Adeline! A sense of the painful truth came over her; she felt sick at heart; faint, humbled, ashamed. She sat down, and leaned

in deep dejection over the fire. Yet, ere the footsteps which she heard in the garden came close to the window, she reproved the idle suspicions which she blushed to own. "My father has too much real concern for my happiness," she muttered to herself, answering her own thoughts.

In a few moments there was a bustle in the hall; bandboxes were carried in, imperials thrown down; post-boys were being paid; and Miss Williams's voice, high in command, was heard to echo through the passages.

"Betty, is my room ready? James, there, carry my dressing-box up stairs. Mr. Meadows, my dear, have you dropped your spectacle-case? Well now, Nancy, quick! some stewed oysters and toasted cheese in the breakfast-room. Will you have your Hollands and water, dear?"

She burst open the door of the breakfast-room as she spoke. "My dear angel, Adeline, here to receive us!" She threw her arms round her friend. "Spare me the disclosure, darling!"

There was every reason to spare the dis-

closure, for a new blue satin pelisse, a bonnet trimmed with ribands a mile high, and a fresh detachment of flowing curls, proclaimed the bridal attire.

Mrs. Meadows thought it due to her situation to sit down and shed a few tears on a handkerchief marked "L. M. 36;" but she kept fast hold of Adeline's hand. "I knew you would be overpowered by your feelings, dear. So am I. And as to your dear father, he's the most noble, the most generous, the most devoted man. Oh! his conduct to *me* has been perfection. Such delicacy, such attachment, and such fears, poor dear man, that I should mistake the nature of my feelings for him; but there was no fear of that, Adeline, none! I have loved many times; but never, really, till now! My own darling Adeline! I cannot be a mother to you; *that* our respective ages forbid; but,—Betty, some coals to this fire,—but we shall be fond as sisters. He's *so very* proud of me!" continued Mrs. Meadows, pursuing a sort of monologue. "Loftus has behaved uncommonly ill—horribly! But we won't talk of

that. Why, love, we were married by special licence; my *sposo* was so uncommonly anxious for it all to be over. Mr. Smallwood gave me away, and who should come into the street to see us set out on our tour, but all the little Middletons."

"Can I see my father?" interrupted Adeline, not at all able to keep pace with the raptures of her newly-acquired parent. "Is he in the study?"

"Pardon me, my love. I never allow him to be hurried."

"But I must see my father!" exclaimed Adeline, bursting into a passion of tears. "Well, dear, as you please."—"There can be no harm done now; she can't untie the knot," thought Mrs. Meadows, as Adeline rushed out of the room, and she turned to a little pocket-glass to adjust her curls.

Adeline found her father in his study. He was standing with his back towards her, and did not seem at all inclined to turn his face. On the contrary, he locked and unlocked a drawer three times and snuffed the candles twice, ere he replied to the weeping salutation

of his daughter; when he did venture to greet her, Adeline threw herself silently into his arms.

Not a word of explanation passed. The dutiful child knew that she had no right to exact explanation. Mr. Meadows had no wish to give it. "You will not love me the less?" was all that Adeline said. And a fond pressure of her father answered that question.

Mr. Meadows made no enquiry why she had returned sooner than was expected—conscience supplied an answer to that query. He was not quite sure whether he rejoiced or not, that she was too late; the Northington people would talk a good deal; he hoped he had not injured his respectability; but *his* excuse to his own mind was, the strength of Miss Williams's attachment, which would not let him take any other course.

They went in to supper. The stewed oysters and toasted cheese, though very good—did not look super-elegant after the delicacies of Coughton House. Mr. Meadows would have been particularly obliged to James and Betty, if they had not stared at him all supper-time, as if he had been a fresh-caught animal:—yet he

did not feel much relieved when these myrmidons had retired, and he was left alone with his daughter and his bride. Loftus was never mentioned; as most consonant with the bride's taste, servants were the theme.—

“Sally behaved remarkably ill—so extremely impertinent, dearest Adeline; think of my distress, when, at the last moment, she refused to wash up my rough-dried things. If it had not been for the noble conduct of Mr. Meadows, who generously insisted on their going to Mrs. Miller's, and then turned Sally off, I know not when the happy event could have taken place! It was so far well, wasn't it love,—I had my lilac tabinet made up just in time—and *he* likes lilac—indeed I don't know what he does not like when I put it on.”

Adeline was thankful to escape from all this, and eager to seek the quiet of her own room. But quiet—total quiet—when the mind has received a shock, does not restore its tone. Adeline would have given much for the consolations of an humble, trusty *confidante*—not any of her fine, or great friends; no—it is not to such that we turn in any of the events of life which humble us unspeakably. Dignified

grief is picturesque, and merits dignified consolations. When we find our nicest feelings shocked, yet care not to let the world see our sufferings, there is no one like a homely, comfortable, soothing companion, who has acted the part of sympathizer-general all her life.

There was something that struck Adeline as gross and degrading in these hurried nuptials. To see a man of a grave, precise character, carried away into folly at sixty years of age, is vastly amusing to the world; but to the daughter who reverences the parent as a venerable being above the reach of ridicule, one whose grey hairs she would forfeit her existence to preserve from shame, is absolute anguish. Crabbe, it is said — that least romantic of poets, fell in love—madly in love, at sixty; had I been his biographer, I would not have published the fact. O aged and revered grandsires—or such as might be grandsires! leave to youth its amiable follies, its passions, its hopes! Time and nature warn us to live for others.

It is a great matter in domestic politics to be at one's ease; and a great misfortune to have too much delicacy and refinement. Mrs.

Meadows fell into her new situation as readily as possible. The morning after her journey, she took the privilege of being languishing and fatigued, and reclined on a sofa all day, with a vinaigrette and hartshorn-bottle by her side. But this would not do for the active Louisa long; in the afternoon she was bustling about the house, rummaging closets, scolding the servants, and "my dearing" Mr. Meadows till, partly from fear, and partly from flattery, she carried every point which Adeline had long contested in vain. Old servants were to be turned away, new ones engaged—but oh! the most remarkable era of all! the drawing-room was to be rescued from its silver-paper covering, because Mrs. Meadows had a particular objection to sitting anywhere else.

Poor Mr. Meadows turned shame-faced into his office, among his clerks and clients, and thought the congratulations would never cease; whilst throughout the village the usual observations were wafted from house to house—"Well, they are old enough to do as they like!"—and, "To be sure they had no time to lose!"—"Well, Mr. Meadows can afford to follow his own will."

Then the sitting-up day came on. Mrs. Meadows in a new mob, matronly and fashionable—was stuck up all day on a chair, with Mr. Meadows' favourite cat, by way of conjugal kindness, at her feet; Miss Haines as her bridesmaid. Then such heart-burnings at the neglect of some—such self-gratulation at the amazing condescension of others! Such handing of cake and wine; such criticism of the bride's dress, on the part of those who came out, to those who came in. There were relays of fair damsels all the day—and there had not been such a stir in Northington, as Mrs. Haines observed, since the day of the fashions. Heart-sick, Adeline escaped by a back-door; she, she felt, could not be deemed particularly ornamental on such an occasion—and walked quickly away from the scene of triumph. She passed the rustic ale-house, rang at Lady Theodora's gate-bell, and felt truly happy, although the windows of the cottage were closed, and although even Boa was not there to welcome her, that she was, at last, in peace and alone.

She sat down on a chair which stood on the lawn, and gave full vent to the bitterness

of her feelings, which she had, kindly and considerately, suppressed. The garden was in the first blush of spring-like beauty, and she felt the silent influence of the flowers upon her spirits. Tufts of primroses grew under the still leafless trees; the hepatica had succeeded the snowdrop. In the hollow, a large mezerian bush gave life to the green expanse; the anemones opened their many-coloured petals to the sun; the tulips were just opening; and there seemed scarcely any need of greater variety, or of sweeter smells, than those which the hyacinths afforded.

Whilst Adeline sat, marking the spot where some of her happiest hours had passed, she was startled by the sight of a figure winding round the shrubbery, beyond the dell; as it approached, a sort of awe came over her. "My conjectures are then right," she whispered to herself. "Dear Lady Theodora! you *are* blessed in your son." She rose, and hastened to welcome Mr. Fortescue — for it was he who approached her.

His delight, his ecstasy at seeing her, retarded the explanation which Adeline had

long determined to seek. She released her hand in much confusion from his, and they turned to stroll along the walk.

“ Mr. Fortescue,” said Adeline, earnestly, “ a strange idea possesses my mind. It is confirmed by your presence here. Are you Lady Theodora’s son ?”

She turned, and looked intently on the countenance of the young man.

“ I will answer you,” said the supposed Mr. Fortescue, “ in the spirit of candour in which you seek to know my name — I am Eustace Floyer.”

“ Then, why,” asked Adeline, reproachfully, “ this useless, this cruel concealment. Lady Theodora loves her son — she loves, at least, his memory — the recollection of his childhood is her dearest association. Have you the feelings of a son, that you can remain days, nay weeks, near to her, and withhold from her the happiness — the only happiness she desires, that of knowing you ?”

“ Because,” said Eustace Floyer, “ because I am bound by a promise — a promise exacted from me whilst I believed that my mother had voluntarily given me up to the charge

of others — that I would not make myself known to her until I had attained the age of twenty-one, when all control over my actions must cease.”

“ And the guardian who induced you to make this promise,” cried Adeline, indignantly, “ has he children — does he know a parent’s love, that he can thus disregard the feelings of a mother ?”

“ He has a daughter,” replied Mr. Floyer ; whilst his face was suffused with a deep blush.

Adeline was silent for some moments. “ I cannot comprehend your motive for coming to Coughton.”

“ I wished to see Lady Theodora, — can you suppose that I had no curiosity ? I broke no promise as long as she knew me not ; but I confess — separated as I have been from my childhood, — filial feelings were not uppermost, I had another motive. — Do not reproach me, Miss Meadows,” he added, after a few moments of agitated silence, as he walked by her side, “ whatever pain my apparent alienation — my involuntary separation from my mother may have caused her, I shall endeavour, to the best of my power, to compen-

sate. I love her, indeed I do." He dashed the tears from his eyes as he spoke.

"I have seen much of Lady Theodora of late years," said Adeline, as they paced round again to the bow-window, fringed with the pyricanthia's red berries; "her loneliness here rises to my recollection. I have often felt indignant at the injustice done to her—to her! who might so aptly have guided the mind of her son—she has been much misunderstood."

"But you—you," cried Eustace warmly, "have been a daughter to her—soothing her vexations, according with her tastes!—every letter from my mother to me has conveyed praises of Miss Meadows."

"I have received as much—nay more—of kindness than it has ever been in my power to bestow, and I may, perhaps, need still the sympathy of my kind friend." The melancholy tone of her soft voice attracted the immediate observation of Mr. Floyer.

"I hope you are happy!" he said, gently; "I hope that, in the changes of which I have heard, your happiness has been considered?"

Adeline was silent for some time. "I cannot speak upon that subject, Mr. Floyer," she, at last, replied.

They walked for some time, in silence. Eustace was the first to speak. "This is a lovely scene," he said, looking round him with the enthusiasm of a young man; "but it is not a residence suitable to my mother's rank. Woodcote — poor Stanhope! — is now in preparation for Lady Theodora. I am fitting it up to *her* taste. I am there — but still under my assumed name, — in order to prepare it for my mother. Will you, before I return to place her there, visit the spot, and see if it will be suitable to her inclinations?"

"No, — I cannot, indeed, Mr. Floyer — indeed I cannot," replied Adeline; she burst into tears.

Mr. Floyer looked much surprised — still more concerned; but he was totally unconscious of the painful associations which Adeline had with Woodcote; he drew her to a chair, entreated her to sit down; and, with a tenderness of speech and manner, that again recalled most powerfully the tones of his cousin's voice, he endeavoured to console her.

“The best, the only remedy for my sorrows,” said Adeline, trying to check her tears, “is patience. My home was once happy—it is so no longer! and I have no other resource to look to.”

Mr. Floyer, already far, far too deeply interested in this beautiful and simple being, could have said much, but a delicacy, a timidity natural to his age, resulting from a true and constant attachment, then in its infancy, as ever riveted one being to the memory of another, restrained the expression of his feelings. He conducted her to the gate; and obeying her injunction not to walk farther with her, quickly retreated, and disappeared among the beeches and elms, tenanted in their seclusion solely by the feathered tribe, or by the startled squirrel.

Adeline, with a heavy heart, walked home. Smart bonnets and feathers were retreating as she entered the precincts of the house; and the footboy was retiring from the drawing-room with empty chocolate cups, and with mutilated bride-cake. She would fain have repaired to her own room, but the drawing-room door was wide open; Mrs. Meadows and

the Miss Haineses were seated just in front of it; and there was no slipping away without positive rudeness.

“Come in, come in, Adeline,” cried Mrs. Meadows, as Adeline fancied, in a rather more authoritative tone than formerly. “Such capital fun!” and Louisa clapped her hands with delight. “Little Gadsden has got into another scrape,—just hear; Mrs. Haines knows Sir Tufton’s housekeeper, who knows Mr. Stowe’s bailiff; and Mr. Stowe’s bailiff has been attended by young What’s-his-name, at Ardham, and young What’s-his-name declares that the Miss Stoves are pulling caps for the parson.”

“He ’s a shame and a disgrace to the cloth,” cried Mrs. Haines, “and I should like to see his gown stripped off.”

“I should have thought him a very innocent person,” said Adeline, meekly. Mrs. Meadows, Mrs. and the Miss Haineses exchanged furtive looks. “Mark my words,” cried Louisa, “and he’ll be at Miss Meadows’ feet before long.”

Adeline smiled — too careless to contradict the report; and, as they rose to depart there was a marked coolness in the manner of Mrs.

and the Miss Haineses towards her. But she was far too depressed in spirits to concern herself about such minor troubles as the cool looks of gossiping neighbours.

Day by day some accustomed privilege — some symptom of domestic power and importance, valued only when withdrawn, was wrested from her without delicacy, yet without malice. It was sheer vulgarity that made Mrs. Meadows continually, and without design, *tread* upon the feelings of her inmate, as an awkward man treads on one's toes. Her immediate assumption of mistress-like importance was unmitigated by a single self-reproach or misgiving. All that had preceded her dynasty was wrong, and must be altered; all that had occurred since that event was perfect in its way. The new servants were treasures — the new carpets pictures! The new dresses, which her gaudy taste imported into the green shades of the grove, were alone the fashion. Mrs. Meadows wished she could modernize Miss Meadows, and make her less of an old maid; raisin wine was abolished, maid-servants were voted inconsistent; the old bureau, once so coveted, was sent up to the

garrets; and Louisa contemplated, though in secrecy, sending Mr. and Mrs. Meadows, or their effigies, as she called them, to the garrets also.

And she *did* succeed in new-modelling Grove House,—as it was henceforth to be called. Instead of the orderly, respectable, characteristic abode of a thriving, country attorney, it, and all its appurtenances, became flashy and flaring; wanting the simplicity of its former unpretending comfort, and failing in the “style” which Mrs. Meadows wished to give to it. A tawdry footman, with an ill-made livery, was a sorry substitute for the neat-handed Phillis of former days. An attempt at *entrées* and removes failed at the first dinner-party. The word “Office” being removed from the green door, the clients, “vulgar creatures,” turned perpetually by mistake into the wrong room. Farmers, with clod-hopping boots, two inches thick, bolted in when the Vicar’s wife was calling, leaving a strong odour of tobacco behind them, and staying just long enough to explain to the affronted Mrs. Meadows, that they “only stepped in about the *toithes*.” The footboy,

from inexperience, and a natural country loquacity, which Mrs. Meadows encouraged and called "good fun," revealed the sacred mysteries of the "Office," by messages which should never, as Mr. Meadows observed, have come in by that door. Then, there was all the inconvenience which indiscretion and vulgarity in a mistress introduces into a house. Mrs. Meadows was joking and familiar with her servants one moment, and expecting them to treat her with amazing respect the next. She was to be mortal — they perfect; she gleaned all that could amuse her from the stores of their gossip, and felt indignant when she discovered that they sometimes communicated those stores to others, relatively to herself. Then she was perpetually falling out with the clerks. Mr. Brooksbank, the head man, whom Mr. Meadows would rather have died than affronted, was an angel of politeness one day — the next a demon of incivility; and all his faults, which had lain like title-deeds in the office, were brought inaptly into light. Then there were two unhappy human machines, — boys who earned their seven shillings a week by copying all the words in Johnson's dic-

tionary — literary characters without souls,— boys, like other boys, with peccadillos hitherto not deemed worth notice or correction. But the active Louisa — she, whose genius for detection had been all her life exercised,—now made a strong party with the servants against these misguided creatures, and gave the whole weight of her support to Betty the cook, and Sukey the laundress, in that spirit of persecution which female domestics seem to have intuitively, against boys, girls, small dogs, and any animal which can be with impunity oppressed.

Adeline saw these incipient evils without triumph, without an attempt to rescue her father's household from its impending degradation; for she perceived that Mrs. Meadows, highly satisfied with herself, and revelling in authority, had the amiable practice of going directly contrary to anything that she had advised; and a little quickness of reply in Mrs. Meadows, although instantly salved over with "my darlings," "my sweets," and "my angels," warned the gentle step-daughter that there was nothing more to be said by way of expostulation.

Adeline took an early opportunity of telling her father that she had seen Stanhope Floyer; that he had renewed his addresses; and that she had observed her promise, and bid him think of her no more.

“You were right, you were quite right, my dear girl,” replied Mr. Meadows, “we must not give way to inclination.”

Adeline retired; *she* must not give way to inclination, though her father might. On her the sacrifice must fall. Had her father considered her happiness in his recent proceeding? The question distressed her, and she turned to her usual resource, a stroll in the

CHAPTER XIV.

“ If in that breast, so good, so pure,
Compassion ever loved to dwell,
Pity the sorrows I endure,
The cause—I must not—dare not tell.”

SIR JOHN MOORE.

IN all her walks, whether by design or accident, she knew not, Adeline met Mr. Eustace Floyer. It was a relief to her to fly from the perpetual aiming to be genteel, and struggling to be great, by which Mrs. Meadows was actuated, to the real superiority of mind, character, and manners of a well-educated and well-principled gentleman. Day by day the intimacy between Eustace and Adeline deepened into — they *called* it friendship; but into that sort of friendship which laid the foundation, in the mind of one of the party, of a romantic and lasting attachment.

Men who have independent fortunes; men who look round upon the most favoured haunts of the sylvan gods, and call those

green glades their own, have leisure to indulge flights of imagination, sometimes to their sorrow. The busied labourer in this great world's troublous scene, the man whose thoughts are occupied with a profession, may, and it is said he always does, throw off an ill-fated preference more readily than women; but the high-born owner of the soil, whose every clod teems with historic recollections, stands more upon an equality with woman kind. He is bred up in a region of tenacious impressions and faithful recollections. He has not had to buffet with those tides which bid the professional man to know this one truth—that circumstance is stronger than inclination. All that was high-minded and enthusiastic in the civil wars emanated from the country-gentlemen, whose nice sense of honour had not been tarnished by the detrimental process of professional interests and mercantile dealings.

Eustace Floyer was endowed with strong feelings, repressed, but not alloyed, by a solid and superior education. His talents were vigorous; his hopes of distinguishing himself, perhaps at the bar, perhaps in the

senate, were auspicious to his future progress. But he fell in love; and, for the present, all the future was concentrated into one bright gleam upon the prospect.

He made no avowal, for he was timid and anxious, and he attempted no concealment of his attachment. But, whether it was the consciousness of her own secret feelings, or his consanguinity to the object of those feelings, which blinded Adeline to that which all might have seen, she knew not then, and she knew not until years afterwards, the sincerity and strength of that attachment which evinced itself only in actions; in deeds of disinterested generosity, and in an inexhaustible confidence and respect.

Some weeks, — to Eustace Floyer weeks of unalloyed enjoyment, weeks on which in the gloom of his after-life his saddened memory fondly pondered, — passed fleetly away. Lady Theodora came home, and her son instantly, in observance of his promise, left Woodcote. But it was only for two months; when, certainly, he should claim his mother's blessing, and place her in the residence which he had embellished for her comfort.

“I hear constantly of you, Adeline,” was Lady Theodora’s observation on Adeline’s second visit to the cottage. “My son bids me always write to him of one whose friendship has been a comfort to his mother. It is very kind, is it not?”

Adeline turned aside to check an impulse to reveal all and make the mother happy.

“But to return to the Lawsons,” said Lady Theodora, “the influence Mr. Lawson has acquired at Coughton is inconceivable. I could wish that he hated play as much as I do. I confess to you, I would not trust a son within his influence.”

Adeline thought of Stanhope Floyer, and rejoiced that he was, she trusted, absent from England; for she had constant misgivings of Mr. Lawson.

How doubly is absence felt when there is added to its pangs an incessant apprehension about the character and conduct of one immeasurably dear!

“Sir Horace—,” pursued Lady Theodora, “I wish he may not give his mother the heart-ache! — has a taste for low company, and no taste for anything better. Happy would it be

for the property if he were not to marry; for one can have no great hopes of his choice adding dignity to Coughton. Mrs. Lawson's fine boy would then succeed!"

"— So you have been at the Hill!" was Mrs. Meadows' exclamation on Adeline's return, after this conversation. "Lady Theodora's far too grand to honour me with a call, I suppose. I saw her in her old rusty-grey gown, with a rubbishing black silk cloak, and a bonnet that wouldn't fetch sixpence, budging across the church-yard yesterday. I should be ashamed to be seen walking with her."

Adeline attempted no apology either for her friend's gown or her friend's manners. Day after day reproaches were heaped upon her for Lady Theodora's rudeness, Lady Theodora's omissions, and all that Lady Theodora was known to do or say,—and everything she did or said, Mrs. Meadows found means to discover — was subjected to the severest criticism.

"I should suppose Lady Theodora, out of respect to my father," Adeline, at length goaded by repeated assaults, began—

"Oh, she may leave it alone! As to calling,

I can command as good society as Lady Theodora every bit. The Floyers are quite a broken-down family. I have no ambition to sit on one of Lady Theodora's cane chairs without a cushion, or to taste her bacon sent up ham-fashion, at her dinners. I can do very well without my Lady The's notice, any time."

"My dear," said Mr. Meadows, entering, "here's Mr. Brooksbank very much offended that you haven't returned his wife's call. Now Brooksbank is a good deal hurt. It has always been the custom in this house"—and Mr. Meadows glanced at the picture of his former wife—"to ask the Brooksbanks to dinner the first Sunday in every month. It will not be neighbourly to omit it. You will get the character of being high, Louisa. Mrs. Brooksbank is an excellent woman—the mother of a family."

"—For that I can vouch," returned Louisa; "of ten ugly brats, and likely to have ten more. For heaven's sake, my dearest, my noble-minded Mr. Meadows, don't let us have those twenty feet upon our new carpets. Besides, my darling, you know I've been always used

only to the best society, and can't bear to lower myself, even for your sake, my love."

"— Yes, but Brooksbank ;" — Mr. Meadows began —

"Is a valuable creature — I am sure he is ; but no more of a gentleman than Jim, the groom. I would as lief ask Jim to dinner."

"My father," thought Adeline, as she disappeared, and left the matrimonial dispute going on — "would have said to me, 'I wish Mrs. Brooksbank to be invited' — and would never have expostulated for an instant. How potent is Mrs. Meadows' influence !" Poor Adeline ! She knew not this world well enough to draw the conclusion which experience teaches us, that those who *will* have, do have. Assumption gains its own way, and this world, such as it is, is undoubtedly subservient to the ill-tempered.

In a few days Lady Theodora called ; and then she rose, like the stocks after the Reform Bill, to an undue height in Mrs. Meadows' estimation. All she said was quoted to each successive caller ; all that she did, "was amiable and well-intentioned ;" even her dress was "genteel, though quiet," and "far, far pre-

ferable to the solid dowdiness of Mrs. Smallwood, and the vulgar finery of Mrs. Haines."

One evening, Adeline repaired to the Hill, in consequence of a message from Lady Theodora. How tranquil was the scene of beauty as she entered the cottage-garden! The sheep were browsing on the hill; the spiral blossoms of the chestnut were in full perfection; the lilacs were in bloom; whilst masses of anemones in flower garnished the grassy dell.

Lady Theodora met her friend with much agitation of manner.

"I am expecting my son. This is his twenty-first birthday! it is eleven years since we have met!—" were the only words which she could falter out.

The friends walked round to the shrubbery, and Lady Theodora found a power of speech more fluent, as they proceeded.

"It is eleven years since we met. Should I not find him what I wish and hope—or should he be contracted in mind and heart—unsound in principle—or weak of purpose—or—or—what I could, perhaps, bear worse—indifferent to her who has had a mother's claims, but not a mother's power.—"

“ You will find him all you wish,” cried Adeline, “ that is, so I prophecy, — accomplished, handsome, and with his mother’s kind heart, and upright mind — can I say more ? ”

Lady Theodora smiled ; — “ You seem to have a good opinion of each other by intuition, Adeline, for though he has never seen you, Eustace has always something to say of my kind friend ; some inquiries after her welfare ; some hints of his admiration for her character. Hark ! was it the sound of carriage-wheels ? ”

“ Nothing but old Robin’s waggon,” replied Adeline, rising on tip-toes to see the ponderous machine as it proceeded up the hill. “ There is — there is the door-bell ! Had I not better leave you, dear Lady Theodora ? ”

“ No, no, stay with me — support me, Adeline,” answered Lady Theodora, melting into tears. “ Ah, it is not he ! It is Mr. Fortescue ! ” she added, gazing with an expression of bitter disappointment at the young man who at this moment precipitately entered.

Adeline sprang forward; for she perceived that the impression on the mind of Eustace was, that his mother, estranged from him, as it had, from interested motives, been represented, welcomed him not.

“Receive him! welcome him! Lady Theodora, and bless him!” cried Adeline, leading the young man to Lady Theodora. As she spoke, she relinquished the trembling hand of Eustace, and disappeared amid the overhanging trees of the shrubbery.

The picture of happiness which she trusted to witness, made *her* unhappy. She alone seemed marked for disappointment and misfortune. She now stood isolated; her father had found comfort in another source:—Lady Theodora, who had rested upon her society, was now blessed in her son. Yet, as she clambered up the hill, and looked down upon the embosomed cottage, into which the newly-united relatives had retired, Adeline reproached herself for those wayward and selfish feelings. The calm air, the rising moon, the stillness of nature, gradually soothed those rebellious murmurings. She strove to *hope*; and if there could have been depen-

dence on him with whom her destiny was voluntarily linked, present obstacles would have been tolerable; but amidst all the perplexities of her condition, there was no confidence in the fidelity of Mr. Stanhope Floyer's attachment; no reliance upon his prudence, nor upon his acquiring such habits of self-denial as could alone redeem his shattered fortunes, and induce Mr. Meadows to give his consent to his union with Adeline. Above all, there was a goading, wearing apprehension in her mind that other, and lighter characters might gain an influence over the versatile nature of one whose remarkable elegance and beauty of form and face exposed him to all those seductions which a fond heart fears for its madly-idolized object. Poor Adeline! How often did Lady Theodora's hints occur to her memory!

But invited by a message from Lady Theodora to return to the cottage, Adeline checked her forebodings, and striving to look cheerful, she entered the drawing-room. Mr. Floyer was alone when she went in; he arose, and grasping her hand, thanked her fervently for years of kindness to his mother.

“I must now be guided by your advice and wishes,” he said; “indeed they will always guide me,” he added, in a low tone. “When shall I take my mother to see Woodcote? When will you go with us?”

Adeline had just regained her composure; the question put it to flight. She turned aside abruptly.

“Have I displeased you?” asked Eustace, in a tone of much anxiety.

“No,” replied Adeline, recovering herself. “My spirits are variable; and without, perhaps, a real cause, I have—I have a great objection to seeing Woodcote just at present.”

“You give me great concern,” said Eustace, gently, “when you allude to any unhappiness. Will you not make a friend of me? Will you not entrust me, who am under such obligations to you, with the source of your distress? Perhaps, I can remedy it.”

“Oh, Mr. Floyer! would that you could!” exclaimed Adeline, mournfully. “But, I believe,” she added, quickly, “the unfortunate are best left to themselves, or, I should say, to that good Providence which watches over us. You—you see, and Lady Theodora,

are happily re-united, not only really, but in heart ; and I" — she paused, and ere Eustace could answer, Lady Theodora came in.

Some hours of free communion, and of innocent happiness were spent in the cottage that night. Whilst rejoicings were held in great festivity and splendour upon the several properties of Mr. Floyer, the young heir himself sat with his mother and Miss Meadows in the drawing-room of the sequestered Hill House. It was late when his horses were brought to the gate, for he was to ride back to Woodcote that evening.

Lady Theodora, as she embraced her son, made him promise her to visit her early on the morrow. "And you will take care of Miss Meadows as far as the Grove?"

Eustace accompanied Adeline home. Then, as he left her at the base of the flight of steps, and mounted his horse in the lane, she stood listening to the tramping of the hoofs, which took the direction to Woodcote.

Soon, very soon, the return, and the interview, and the reconciliation, as it was called, was rumoured in the village; and the denizens of Northington, like other peo-

ple, adepts at settling the affairs of their neighbours, arranged that Lady Theodora was to settle at Woodcote—that was certain. Miss Meadows would live with her—that was likely, and would, eventually, marry Mr. Eustace Floyer—that would be convenient. But “the world,” to use the high-sounding phrase of Mrs. Meadows, when speaking of the Northington people, was disappointed. Lady Theodora did *not* settle at Woodcote; Adeline did *not* go to live with her; and whether she and Mr. Eustace Floyer were to be united was yet to transpire from the Book of Fate. Meantime there was abundance for “the world” to talk about, independently of these signal events.

One day, when Mr. Brooksbank was over head and ears in a lease, whilst the two clerks were writing away, without an instant to rest, even in the accustomed attitude, with a pen behind each ear, a new client, as Mr. Brooksbank conceived, walked into the office.

Mr. Brooksbank was a man of two characters; to the clerks and all that host of *et cetera*, repulsive, and haughty; to clients, he could assume a conventional civility, ac-

panied, in certain instances, with a remarkable show of interest in their concerns, which they might or might not credit, just as they pleased.

He arose from his high seat, as a stranger entered, and the attorney bowed low, very low, for the proprietor of Woodcote stood before him.

“What a fine young man, and what a fine property he has!” was Mr. Brooksbank’s secret exclamation, as courteous, though hurried, Eustace Floyer bowed, and respectfully addressed him.

“I expected to find Mr. Meadows here. Can I see him?” asked the young man, colouring vividly.

“O certainly, certainly, Mr. Floyer—nothing that I can do to assist you, I suppose? That is the way, just across the hall. Jim! open the library door; but won’t you step in and see the ladies, Mr. Floyer? Mrs. Meadows is in the way—I’m not sure that Miss Meadows—

Mr. Floyer answered only by a bow, and Mr. Brooksbank retreated, saying to his favourite myrmidon, “Now I say that is a gentleman—I don’t suppose his property

turns up less than ten thousand a year, and quite unencumbered as yet."

Unconscious of this eulogium, Eustace Floyer walked manfully into Mr. Meadows' study, and stopped not until he stood before the staid solicitor.

Mr. Meadows had a slight, a very slight acquaintance with Mr. Floyer, but entertained a vast respect for the man who could purchase Woodcote over everybody's head; a vast respect for one who maintained a fine stud, but kept no racers; an immense respect for one who had not a single mortgage on his estates; a most exalted opinion, indeed, of one whose great qualities were contrasted

his resolution, and fixed his compressed lips together in all the energy of strong determination.

The low and rich tones of Eustace Floyer's voice aroused him from a few moments of painful abstraction. When he began, the young man's utterance was broken by agitation; as he proceeded, the subject on which he came to speak, imparted courage; his language became fluent, energetic; it was the pleading of a young lover, avowing manfully to the father of her whom he loved, a first, a fond attachment—asking, with a proud consciousness of no obstacle in his own conduct and character, yet with a humility which sprang from deep affection, permission to address his daughter.

He ceased, and Mr. Meadows drew a deep breath. "You do me much honour—much, much honour; I am relieved," he added, off his guard, for the father prevailed over the man of the world, "I own I am relieved. I thought, sir, you had come to plead, not for yourself, but for another person."

"And who, sir?" asked Eustace, sur-

prised, "could you suppose would wish me to plead in such a cause? To whom do you refer?"

"Oh, sir! my daughter must inform you! She has had her own schemes and plans to build upon. Thank God! all that is knocked on the head long ago!"

"Has Adeline, then, had any other attachment?" asked Eustace, whilst the colour fled from his fine face.

Mr. Meadows gave him a look. "He knows nothing," thought the solicitor. "Why need I say anything? She never can resist such a face as *that*;" and Mr. Meadows fixed his eyes still more stedfastly on the anxious countenance of the young suitor.

"If there has been any previous — any previous engagement," Eustace began—

"Oh, sir! every girl has her fancies — a mere youthful predilection — crushed in the bud—crushed in the bud, sir. Adeline is a good girl, and would make any sacrifice for me."

"There has then been a sacrifice?" asked Eustace, so mournfully, that Mr. Meadows hastened to repair the mischief he had done.

He might have repaired it by candour and honesty; the only aids in getting out of a scrape, and, generally, the last resorted to; but Mr. Meadows, though sincere, was politic; now politic people are more to be dreaded than those who are addicted to positive falsehood.

“ My child has not been without her admirers, Mr. Floyer. Whatever others might think of the connection, *I* thought well of young Dornton, of the firm of Dornton, Currier, and Wilson, in the Poultry; she wouldn't even look at him; yet I may say he offers to her once a year, still; and his conduct to our office has been, and is, the same. I think, nevertheless, I may ensure you, there.”

“ I think so, too,” said Eustace joyously, longing to carry off his beloved, his admired and beautiful Adeline from this commercial-spirited old father. “ May I — may I, sir, ask her that question, myself?”

“ Certainly, by all means, and you have my hearty wishes for your success. The title-deeds to Woodcote — there was a little talk of a flaw in them — are *quite* secure, Mr. Floyer?”

“Quite, but it is my wish and intention, now I am of age, to enable my cousin to live there once more, and I hope he will accept of the place for his life-time. I must reside in Yorkshire.”

“Very true, very good;—and this cousin, to whom you are such a benefactor, do you know anything of his present pursuits—much of his character?”

“Only that he has been imprudent, and that he is a reformed man. Oh, Stanhope is a very fine fellow, his good-nature alone has led him astray,” answered Eustace, with an absent air, for all the Stanhopes in the world could not interest him at that moment

in the presence of her excellent mother, shall receive you."

"To-morrow! must I wait till to-morrow?" asked the lover, wistfully.

"Just as you please—perhaps I may as well prepare my daughter for your visit?"

"No sir! let me have your daughter's unpremeditated, unbiassed reception.—On second thoughts, my mother expects Miss Meadows this evening—may I, dare I ask permission, under present circumstances, to conduct her to Hill Cottage?"

"Certainly—oh, undoubtedly—no impropriety at all. I will ring the bell for Adeline," said Mr. Meadows, graciously rising as he spoke, and "suiting the action to the word."

CHAPTER XV.

“ Too faithful heart ! thou never canst retrieve
Thy wither'd hopes ; conceal the cruel pain ;
Patience, consoling maid, may yet be thine,
Go seek her quiet cell, and hear her voice divine ! ”

MRS. TIGHE.

MR. MEADOWS watched Mr. Eustace Floyer and his daughter, as they quitted the Grove. They did not take the direct course to the Hill-house, but crossed a field which was opposite to the Rectory-house. It was a spacious picturesque building, that old Parsonage, shaded by two immense yew-trees, which stood, like guardians, on a small plot of grass before the carriage-sweep. A low porch and a shelving roof denoted that the tenement was not of yesterday ; and a band of St. John's-wort, whose starry flowers had opened to many summers, covered the angle of the house. To the left was a large pond, on which a fleet of white ducks were sailing ; and huge barns

and out-houses for receiving tithes in kind, added to the farm-like character which seemed to form a connecting link between the dweller for the time being in the Rectory-house, and his rural parishioners.

A long glebe field, with a path across it, lay in front of the Parsonage. What a stability there was in the aspect of the old place ! There it rose, the humble representative of its sovereign, the church ; and whilst all around was changing, all was sublunary, the venerable tenement stood, unaltered ; the alder which fluttered in the breeze was unmolested by cupidity ; the barns and stables might not be pulled down ; the very path-way was remembered as far back as the memory of man could reach ; — the pigeon-house on its pole had stood there since the Restoration. The edifice, like the mother church, was capable of additions, and subject to dilapidations ; discrepancies might be planted here — irregularities might arise there ; but still there it was — looked for by the travelled rustic returning to his home — sought by the weary pilgrim in the world's turmoils, when, coveting a sight of his native village, he passed

through Northington — viewed with tearful eyes by the families of former denizens, the posterity of the departed ;—these felt that *their* destinies were changed—they were passengers, but the old house stood there still, with its back-ground of perennial out-houses, its guardian evergreens.

Silently and slowly Eustace and Adeline sauntered past the Rectory ; a green lane at the extremity, branching off, led towards the Hill-house. The way was all too short ; too short for him who had much to say, and little courage to say anything at all. For Eustace had been revolving in his mind the confusion and partial betrayal which had escaped in his interview with Mr. Meadows. Fresh ideas, which he now wondered had never occurred to him, crowded into his mind. Adeline had doubtless often seen Stanhope Floyer ;—it was evident that the hasty expressions of Mr. Meadows had reference to him.

“ How could I be so blind ! ” was the reflection of Eustace, as dejected, confused, and absorbed, he walked by the side of Adeline, without so much as breathing one syllable of his inmost wishes.

She thought him unusually cold, reserved, and ungracious. Poor Eustace ! He was not ungracious, but this was his first disappointment — the first check to ardent feelings — the first sorrow to one whose career had hitherto been one of unvaried prosperity.

Once, rather abruptly, he stopped short, and asked Adeline, “ Why she had objected to visit Woodcote. The question brought a blush on the cheek, and then tears into the eyes, of Adeline. Mr. Floyer made no comment, but hurried on towards his mother’s house.

How he had calculated upon the happiness of that evening ! For he had mistaken the gentle character of friendship for the warm attributes of love. He was young, unsuspecting, guileless, generous, — capable of great sacrifices, endowed with wonderful self-government. Impetuous, irritable people talk much of their own generosity ; it is the self-controlled, the discreet, the forbearing, to whom one must look for actions of self-denial.

With a heavy heart, Eustace stopped at the green gates of the Hill-cottage. He felt as if he could not, at that moment, encounter his

mother's gaze. Yet it might all be suspicion, — or error. The way up the hill, winding through a sort of wood, with straggling and fern-covered banks, looked pleasant—Eustace, with much agitation, asked his companion if she would walk a little farther with him.

Adeline had withdrawn her arm, as they stood at the gate, from that of Eustace—he did not offer his again, and they walked a little apart up the hill. There was something so strange, so perturbed, in the manner of Eustace, that Adeline, whose thoughts were always running upon Stanhope, took a sudden fright. She began to fancy that something had happened to her absent lover; she breathed fast and thick — fancies crowded into her anxious mind—she watched the countenance of Eustace, and when, after a time, they gained the summit of the hill, and stood upon the brow of a common, her fears became uncontrolable. She wildly grasped the arm of Eustace, and, gazing in his face, besought him to tell her if he had heard any news that concerned him — any, any intelligence, she gasping said, — “of your cousin, — of Stanhope?”

Eustace started — he looked in the face of

Adeline, and all his projected interrogatories were answered. Their eyes met; hers were fixed with an imploring look on his; his—but who could describe their expression at that moment?

Eustace could have thrown himself at her feet—could have entreated her to spare him the pang of disappointment, which he foresaw and dreaded, as the shepherd, watching the storm, foresees the thunder-bolt from afar;—there was a short, but stern, contest in his mind;—it was calmed—the struggle was over; he again looked upon that face of suffering, and thought only of *her*.

He assured her promptly, that he knew nothing disastrous relative to Stanhope—his voice sank almost to a whisper as he said, “He is to be envied for the interest that you feel in him. I have every reason to suppose that he is well, quite well!”

“What must you think of me, Mr. Floyer?”—asked Adeline, after a pause.

Eustace made no reply;—and as they walked on, Adeline, gathering courage, said “I have long wished to confide in you, Mr. Floyer—in our walks I have often been on

the point of doing so. Has not Lady Theodora told you?"

"No!" answered Eustace, turning very pale—"my mother has never confided to me anything that you would wish concealed."

"Lady Theodora, I dare say, thought it all a foolish affair, and as well forgotten," said Adeline, with a sigh.—"I wonder at my own temerity—I wonder at my confiding thus in a young man; but I have my motives—I have reasons which my conscience dictates."

"We have seen a great deal of each other,"—she added, after a pause. "You have been unreserved in your conversation with me. You have given me your confidence on every subject—I—"

"—You will do me much honour by confiding in me," said Eustace, quickly. "Treat me as a friend—as a brother."

"Your kindness to Mr. Stanhope Floyer first won my regard," said Adeline—"for he has suffered much on my account, much from misunderstandings, somewhat, I must think, from the indiscretion of my brother."

"Then there was an engagement?"—asked Eustace, trembling as he spoke.

“There was. It has been broken off—quite—quite; and my father has seen me pine without one relenting expression. Now you see why I could not visit Woodcote—why the entreaty has so often brought tears;—for I never was attached to anyone else. Our acquaintance began first when I left school, under your dear mother’s roof—and although such feuds have occurred as can never be reconciled, my heart is still true whatever—whatever—that of Stanhope may be.”

“He must, he will, he shall be true!” exclaimed Eustace, fervently—

“—And of what avail?” said Adeline, as they entered the gates of the cottage. “My father never will give his consent—and I will never grieve him by asking it again. No! Mr. Floyer! I have no fond false expectations. I do not delude myself with hopes. I strive to be content, if I can avoid despair. You are not angry with me? You do not think me very foolish?—perhaps wrong? Ah! if you knew how few friends I have, you would not withdraw your friendship from me!”

“And I never will!” exclaimed Eustace, fervently.—He kept his word.

From that hour, however, until, in after years, he came to cheer her in seasons of sorrow, Adeline saw but little of Eustace Floyer. He avoided her; or, when they met there was a distance and gravity in his deportment which looked but little like the confidence of friendship; and Adeline, who had not imparted the circumstances of her hopeless case from weak motives, saw that in so doing she had lost a friend.

She grieved at this fresh disappointment, but she did not regret the step which she had taken; for she felt, and felt truly, that there is a degree of dishonour in that intimacy which sometimes entangles the heart of the free, leaving the engaged and attached one in the chains previously worn. She estimated and admired the enthusiastic and noble character of Eustace, and she resolved that she would not be the person to betray that ardent nature into a sentiment which could only be succeeded by sorrow.

She could not but read his heart; she could not but see that there was a cauterizing care at the heart's core. For a while, the generous young man sank under the depress-

ing influence of disappointment; his countenance betrayed a despondency which stung Adeline to the quick. Mr. Meadows could not make out the circumstances of the case. His daughter and Mr. Floyer had walked away together — but nothing had come of the proposal.

Lady Theodora's plans were suddenly changed; "Eustace," she said, one day, in answer to an inquiry of Adeline's, "must keep his terms at the Temple, not that he will ever practice law as a profession, but it is his wish to study it."

"And you will go to Woodcote?" said Adeline.

"I think of accompanying my son to London," was Lady Theodora's brief reply.

"To London!"

"And why that melancholy accent?" asked Lady Theodora, smiling.

"Because — because, — do not think me selfish! — but *all* my happiness will be gone when you leave me. Oh! dear Lady Theodora, what can I, what shall I do? I cannot forget Stanhope; I cannot conquer an attachment which is hopeless; I cannot cease to regret—

and the sole motive which sustained me is gone. My father depends on me no longer. I am no longer essential to his comfort. Oh, Lady Theodora! I sometimes think there is not a human being that cares for me! That my life is valueless. But I know that such thoughts are wrong; I know that they border on discontent; pardon, dear Lady Theodora, my thus disclosing feelings which I have hidden from every one, hitherto."

Lady Theodora kissed her moistened cheek. "We must trust," she said, "to happier times. We know, Adeline, that the affairs of this life are not guided by a blind destiny, but by a supreme and benignant will. What do you say to Stanhope's possible return to Woodcote? What do you say to meeting him here?"

"Oh, Lady Theodora! mock me not with visions of impossibilities! I cannot meet him; I must not see him — the iron hand of authority is upon me! I am bound by a promise which I dare not break. All hope of my father's relenting is for ever dispelled. As to Woodcote, I must banish all associations with that dear spot for ever from my remembrance."

“Wait a few days ere you abandon yourself wholly to despair,” replied Lady Theodora, smiling.

“Ah!” thought Adeline, as she crossed some fields to avoid the public path home, “Lady Theodora, — even she does not feel — cannot feel for me. She knows not the misery of loving too fondly — she knows not the misery of distrust. She will go to London and forget me. How can I expect that Stanhope, courted by the great and gay, can remain constant to a simple country-girl, whose sole merit, in his eyes was her affection! Oh, no! Let me tutor myself to know, and to bear the truth.”

She entered the shrubbery of her father’s pleasure-grounds by a little wicket. It was necessary for her to pass his study window. She heard voices in it, and was surprised to see Mr. Eustace Floyer in earnest conversation with her father. There were papers and parchments on the table before them.

A week elapsed, and Adeline heard little more of Lady Theodora’s scheme for visiting London. Indeed, she guessed that legal difficulties of some sort prevented her ladyship from moving; for Lady Theodora was seldom

out of law. When she had finished in one court, she generally managed to get into another; nothing had ever gone straight in her affairs. Some people cannot even discharge a servant without incurring a suit in the Secondaries' court, or a summons to Bow Street! Others cannot hire a coach without being overcharged. It seems the destiny of many to resist and to encounter the greatest impositions from toll-men. Fate is very capricious! There are some characters whose vices are such as to make even good Christians desire their exposure and chastisement, — yet they oftentimes escape detection. There are others so worthy, and even so precise in their notions of virtue, that one might suppose them patterns for the social world to copy. Some hastiness of temper, some overnicety of conscience, or averseness to expense, will bring even characters irreproachable before the public — and that in the most obnoxious and invidious light.

It was in the course of a week after the first interview between Eustace and Mr. Meadows, that they again met; but not in the library of the solicitor; it was in the drawing-

room at Woodcote. Tokens of wealth, an air of elegance, had succeeded to the dilapidated antiquity of Stanhope Floyer's days. All was replenished; yet many things had been bought in, and were in the same state as when last Mr. Meadows, trembling, and yet indignant, had passed through that drawing-room. Well-dressed servants had succeeded sheriffs' officers; a prim, important house-keeper, with the word 'respectable' stamped, to the mind's eye, on every fold of her gown, curtsied and withdrew with dignity as Mr. Meadows paced the hall. What a contrast to the ringleted and slip-shod "Maria," or "Margaret," who, as the neighbourhood whispered, had been at the stern of that tottering vessel, Mr. Stanhope Floyer's household affairs, and had contributed mainly to the wreck of his fortunes!

Mr. Meadows felt a little nervous as he entered the drawing-room—he came there by appointment; for long and frequent conversations had passed, during the previous week, between him and Eustace Floyer. It was astonishing what an influence the truth, and practical good sense, and strong but not

exaggerated feeling of Eustace, had gained over the mind of the experienced and wary lawyer. It was wonderful to see the deference which Mr. Meadows showed to the opinion of a man scarcely twenty-two years of age.

Any one but Mr. Meadows would have been aware of the languor and dejection of Mr. Eustace Floyer's manner and appearance, as contrasted with his former buoyancy and animation, but Mr. Meadows did not see it: he was so struck with the colours of the new Tournay carpet; so occupied in admiring some rare antiques; so surprised to see his old friend, Elizabeth Stuart, restored to her place on the wall; so much charmed that the cabinets were moved back to their places. They must have "fetched" a good deal for the poor spendthrift, who, when last Mr. Meadows visited Woodcote, was told that his sole dependence was to be on the sum produced by those heir-looms, which had been collected and bequeathed by a proud ancestry.

Mr. Meadows cast his eyes upon some papers, copies of deeds and agreements, which lay upon the table, and felt in his element directly.

“This is very generous, very noble of you, Mr. Floyer,” he said, as he sat down to peruse the documents, wiping his spectacles carefully. “Should my daughter and Mr. Stanhope Floyer ever forget this —”

“— Oh, sir, make no comments,” exclaimed Eustace, abruptly: “pray satisfy yourself on all material points, and leave the rest to the future.”

Mr. Meadows looked up for an instant, for the tone of voice struck him as strange, — the whole proceeding was out of the usual course of things; it was strange that Eustace Floyer, who had been a suitor to him for Adeline, should now plead earnestly, nay more, successfully, for another person; it was unaccountable that he should, to ensure the happiness of these two young persons, convey away his recently-purchased estate to other parties for one life; for Woodcote was to belong to Adeline, during the time of her natural existence. This was a very singular proceeding; Mr. Meadows could hardly believe it when he first heard of it, and on the day when it had been talked over by Lady Theodora, who, from old acquaintance, and

chiefly from having been highly approved of by the calm judgment of the late Mrs. Meadows, had a certain influence over Mr. Meadows' mind. It was strange, however, that try what he would, while he could combat with Lady Theodora, the solicitor could not resist the charm of Eustace Floyer's persuasive eloquence. It gave him a better opinion of Stanhope Floyer that he had the friendship and good will of such a man. The kind and lenient have much to answer for; it is impossible not to be infected by their opinions of others. It gave Mr. Meadows also a very favourable notion of the Floyer family, in general, to discover that there was so much property in it. Mr. Eustace Floyer's estates and personalities had been talked of largely; the wary solicitor had always set down the amount at half; but here was proof in black and white; the rent-rolls had been produced. Mr. Floyer's testamentary dispositions had also been elucidated; he was going to make his will; that will had been drawn out, — it was not yet engrossed, — in Mr. Meadows' office.

“ Then you make Mr. Stanhope Floyer your heir, supposing that you have no issue,

yourself?" said Mr. Meadows, after poring for a good half-hour over the papers before him.

"Yes, and *his* heirs," answered Eustace, in a faltering voice.

"True—good—I understand—but you are a very young man. You will marry, Mr. Floyer. I could have wished—but Adeline has always had her own way;—and, you see, he came first."

"You are very kind to console me," said Eustace, with some bitterness.

"—My cousin Stanhope is my nearest relation," he added, in a few moments, more composedly. "I have scarcely, except Lady Theodora, any other; indeed there has been a sort of fatality in our family. Stanhope is, as you know, of the elder branch. You will not, sir, marry your daughter meanly, his ancestors,—mine—have ever been men of courage, and of honour."

"In his case," replied Mr. Meadows, shaking his head, "it is as well to say as much about his ancestors as possible. But you spoke of a fatality in your family?"

"I should rather say in his. Most have

died young. For several generations this estate has descended to only children. I speak of this merely to explain why our family has not ramified. My father died young. I am an only son, and I begin life, you see, with a disappointment. But I hope," added Eustace, forcing a smile, "that the spell will be taken off,—that the next race that inhabit this place will be prosperous and happy"—he could not finish the sentence, but walked quickly up and down the room.

"I have been persuaded into this," said Mr. Meadows, leaning his face on both his hands, which rested on the table. "Mr. Floyer! remember that the responsibility is yours. It does not become me to speak of Mr. Stanhope Floyer now, but he has been a very thoughtless, a very wild young man."

"But only thoughtless, only wild," said Eustace, stopping; "and this is a great guarantee for his future well-doing," he continued, in a low voice; "his attachment to your daughter;—his marrying the object of a first affection. He must, he will be all you wish."

"I will take your word for it, sir," said Mr. Meadows, "your dispositions in his favour have been so very liberal. You are not going to leave us to-night, I hope, sir? — I see your portmanteau in the hall."

"Yes, sir, I am going to-night to London, in the firm assurance that you will not depart from any of your promises to me: first," said Eustace, in a firm, almost a commanding, tone, "that you will not fail to bestow your daughter upon my cousin; next, that you will never betray to her—Stanhope must know it—the part that I have acted in this affair; her gratitude would not be acceptable to me."

"I will comply, but of course she will guess all," said Mr. Meadows.

"But do not let her feel the weight of obligation if it can be helped," urged Eustace; "let her not know that Stanhope is indebted to me. And now, sir, I must be very inhospitable. This, indeed, is no longer my house, and I must set off and leave you, for my horses wait."

"Bless me! it is like a dream." The solicitor took off his spectacles, wiped his eyes, looked stedfastly at Eustace:—

“You are a fine young man—a very fine young man!” he exclaimed, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm; — “there is nothing now to be done, sir, I think, but to get these deeds engrossed. — The marriage settlements I will see to myself.”

CHAPTER XVI.

“ If any hopes thy bosom share
But those which Love has planted there,
Or any cares but his thy breast enthrall ;
Thou never yet his power hast known,
Love sits on a despotic throne,
And reigns a tyrant if he reigns at all.”

Mrs. BARBAULD.

THE windows of Woodcote were closed for two days ; then they were opened again, and the bells of the neighbouring villages were rung to welcome back its former, and now restored, master. He came, not like the prodigal son, but in a carriage more costly, and with finer horses than usual, and he looked gayer and handsomer and better-dressed than ever. He bowed to the right and to the left, as he passed through Northington, and looked coolly up to the windows of the Grove, but no Adeline was visible.

In the dusk of the evening, however, the

rejected lover was seen stealing down to the Grove. Mr. Meadows was out purposely, it was thought, but Mrs. Meadows received the handsome Stanhope graciously. — *Only* Mrs. Meadows, for Adeline refused to see him until her father came home.

The next day, and the next, Mr. Stanhope Floyer met Mr. Meadows at Lady Theodora's house — neutral ground. A written apology for all past misdeeds had, it was understood, been previously sent by the young gentleman to the solicitor. On the fourth day after the departure of Eustace Floyer, the reprobate cousin was seen riding in full day-light up to the green gate of the Grove.

Most of the Northington people stepped out to see this popular, but immoral, character ride along: his errors were forgotten, — his good traits were alone remembered. There was one person who would willingly have dived into the meaning of all these mysterious proceedings. Although he, Sir Tufton Tyrawley, had almost relinquished the intentions with which he had honoured Miss Meadows, yet he felt considerably affronted when he surmised that she was about to marry anyone else. He made common cause with Mr.

Gadsden, who had returned just in time to avoid the double attachment of the two Miss Stowes, and walked, apparently merely for the sake of conversation, two or three times a day, up and down the sunny walk between the churchyard and the Grove.

Their mutual anxieties begat mutual confidence. Sir Tufton talked over his notions of what a man in his sphere ought to do and not to do—of his difficulties on being asked to be steward of a charity ball at Wolstone, and of the necessity of drawing the line—so favourite an expression of Sir Tufton's, that one would fancy he must at last succeed in drawing this impossible line. Mr. Gadsden was not so much "up" to all this as he hoped in time to be; but he had his secret sorrows, the enmity, combined with the attachment, of the Haines family. It quite put him out to see Miss Susan Haines at church every Saint's day—singing so loud, that there was no chance of not knowing she was there. "In short," concluded Mr. Gadsden, "there isn't, Sir Tufton, a young lady to be spoken of in the village, and one that knows how to keep herself *to* herself, except Miss Meadows."

“She is, indeed, a very well-behaved sort of young woman,” was the baronet’s gracious reply.

“They talk of her marrying Mr. Stanhope Floyer ; but he’s not the man to suit Miss Meadows, Sir Tufton. I think I know her taste better. Miss Meadows should be in a quiet sphere—hem !—I—I—”

“—You have had thoughts of her?” asked Sir Tufton, keeping his countenance open and his thoughts close.

“If Miss Susan Haines, and the Miss Stowes, and a few others, knew what I had thought of Miss Meadows, Sir Tufton, I don’t believe I could preach here another Sunday. The fact is, poor girl, I fear she thinks I’ve used her ill. I went rather *far*, I own, and I have never had an opportunity of saying how much I respect her. The other day, at Mrs. Meadows’ first party, we made a pool of commerce. ’Tis a game in which much preference may be shown, Sir Tufton ;—’twas my wish to put a flush into Miss Meadows’ hands—yet Susan Haines would have it I dealt them to her.”

“Most unhandsome !” cried Sir Tufton, condolingly.

“Miss Meadows got up very soon after-

wards, and I am sure she was offended. She wouldn't even allow me to make an apology—I was thinking of calling now!"

"Do—and I will go in with you—to give you courage."

"I'm not sure," whispered Mr. Gadsden—"that Mrs. Meadows is my friend. She had some foolish fancies herself about me, I believe. It is most insulting in people to have those fancies. Dear! how unlucky!—the bell has just begun! 'Tis only a work-house-child, and half the service will do—'tis astonishing how troublesome these people are! Yes! Sir Tufton, that bull-scene made a great impression on my heart. The danger I went through was nothing—for she, poor thing, was so dreadfully anxious about me. I'm sure I couldn't feel half grateful enough. And to see her thrown away upon Stanhope Floyer!"

"Ah! that will never come to pass," exclaimed Sir Tufton, with some irritation.

"I would come forward in any way—make any sacrifice of my time or feelings—propose to change my condition at once—rather than she should be driven to that,"—said Mr. Gadsden, confidentially.

“ You ’ll be too late—they ’ll put the defunct babe in before you get there,” cried Sir Tufton.

“ And the truth is, I fear I can’t come back to-day, Sir Tufton. You’d better not say I have been so near. I have a letter to write to my hatter,—for I am so afraid of not having my hat for the Visitation—and this child that was, will take me ten minutes at the least.”

“ Well, I will try to console the lady!” said Sir Tufton, turning round to the gate, and giving vent to his suppressed feelings in a hearty burst of laughter.

Miss Meadows was not at home—was occupied—as Mrs. Meadows’ maid was instructed to say. “ And Mrs. Meadows?” asked Sir Tufton. He was shewn in immediately.

“ Well, I know who does not deserve to be spoken to,” cried Mrs. Meadows, elated with Sir Tufton’s visit. “ We are quite old married people now—and you’ve never been to wish us joy. And you may wish us double joy.”

“ What? how?” cried Sir Tufton, ‘turning very red,’—as Mrs. Meadows afterwards expressed it.

“ Our darling Adeline—it will be anguish to part with her—is to have her old love. I can’t tell you all the ins and outs of it; but

Stanhope's here—yes! he's with my lord and master at this very moment. It's a great gratification to me, Sir Tufton, to part with a daughter upon such remarkably affectionate terms—when I tell you, what I am sure will astonish you, that Mr. Loftus Meadows can walk into his father's house, and never notice that father's wife."

"Indeed!—very horrible—but this pretty little affair of your daughter's? You call her your daughter indeed! It's quite absurd! Your sister, you *might* allow—"

"Oh dear yes!—why we were girls together!—as Mr. Stanhope Floyer remarked, he was really taken aback when Mr. Meadows fetched me in."

"Thought he had missed the best catch of the two?"—asked Sir Tufton, familiarly.

"Now no flattery, Sir Tufton. But I was going to tell you—my dearest Mr. Meadows,—whose every thought is that of a gentleman—has behaved so nobly. He has consented to overlook all our future son-in-law's—(don't laugh, Sir Tufton!)—imprudences. Somehow or other Stanhope Floyer has got his affairs settled. He's gone to Woodcote again; they are to live there—for my affectionate Adeline couldn't

bear to be far from the friend of her youth. And Lady Theodora—who really is a most lady-like person, and whose attentions to me I can't say too much of—*she* goes to London—and Mr. Eustace.— ”

“— Ah, what of him?” asked Sir Tufton, who “smoked,” as he expressed it, something behind the arras.

“ Poor young man! — he's very dull and rather weak, I fancy—one of the little Middletons will be just such another—I've sat over him with a sum in the rule-of-three, and that dear boy knew no more at the end of the lesson than he did at the beginning.”

“ Mr. Stanhope Floyer is remarkably fortunate, being a ruined man, to retrieve his fortune in this way,” said Sir Tufton.

“ Why you know, Sir Tufton, Mr. Meadows *has* property,” — said Louisa, drawing up. “ Poor dear Stanhope — many a laugh have he and I had together.”

“ Ah!” groaned Sir Tufton, as he rose to depart—“ he may well laugh. By the by, Mrs. Meadows, it will be capital fun to proclaim Gadsden's disappointment over the village—Gadsden has had thoughts of Miss Meadows, you know.”

“ Mr. Gadsden? — Mr. Gadsden?”—cried Louisa, contemptuously, —“ Mr. Meadows will of course forbid him the house, if he thinks that—I’ll just ring, and order my lady’s maid not to admit him. What a deceitful man he is! I can assure you, Sir Tufton, his attentions to me were such, before my marriage, that I never liked to mention them to Mr. Meadows.”

— “ Much better not,” said Sir Tufton, “ it might make Mr. Meadows uneasy, and, considering the difference of age,—”

“ —Yes,” replied Louisa. “ I am quite aware what discretion that requires.” She looked prim for a moment—and then, as Sir Tufton retired, gave a furtive glance at her ringlets, in one of those convex mirrors, now remnants of antiquity, which shewed a Liliputian resemblance of the whole figure.

Mrs. Meadows sat down to collect her ideas. Mr. Meadows had long been closeted with Stanhope Floyer. She began to be afraid that they had been quarreling again; she grew restless, and her natural curiosity rose to agony; there was a certain china-closet next to the study, and in that retreat any person might hear every word that was said there.

Louisa took a bunch of keys, flew across the hall, and found herself presently ensconced between pie-plates and soup-plates, salad-bowls and supper-trays; the small-ware shook and clattered, even at her tread. This was one of the late Mrs. Meadows' hoards—ladies have left off that practice of antiquity, hoarding; they absolutely wear their things out; in fact, there is too little hoarding in modern establishments. Mrs. Meadows *secunda*, looked round with sovereign contempt on the bits of tea-cups, old china bowls, and other articles treasured up by Mrs. Meadows *prima*, and lost a sentence or two of what Mr. Meadows was saying in the survey. It was a grave, an anxious—a sorrowful admonition from a father to the future husband of his daughter, softened into an entreaty that he would never look at a race-horse, nor hear the sound of a box of dice again. And the most earnest, the most solemn promises—promises that seemed to be breathed in the spirit of truth—words that appeared to come from the heart—were uttered, in reply to this address.

There was a pause—a silence. Mrs. Meadows wished she could have seen the face of

Stanhope Floyer at that moment. After some minutes she heard her husband say, "Then you shall see her." And the heavy tread of Mr. Meadows, quitting the library, resounded through the hall.

Louisa broke a tea-cup or two — what would the departed have said? — in trying to overtake her lord and master. He turned round, and had Mr. Meadows been in recent conversation with a spectre, his face could not have been more blanched. His limbs trembled, his hand shook as he extended it. Awful presentiments crowded into the father's heart — monitors of reason, rather than of weakness! Why were they not obeyed?

Mr. Meadows' livid lips could scarcely utter the sound, "Where is Adeline?"

"I will fetch her—I will call her;—nothing the matter? Mr. Stanhope Floyer is not *off* with the engagement?" asked Mrs. Meadows, knowing, from sad experience, the slippery nature of man's vows.

"Off! no," answered Mr. Meadows in much agitation. "I have been persuaded into this. Lady Theodora, Mr. Eustace Floyer, all, all have been against me—they told me that I was killing my child. If this marriage

should prove unfortunate — if my poor girl should not be happy ”—

“ — Oh, she will—she will ! ” cried Louisa. “ I am sure a sensible young woman could influence Mr. Stanhope Floyer any way. I am sure if I were to marry him I could make him one of the best of men. Yet,” added the kind-hearted Mrs. Meadows, “ if you have any fears—pause ! ”

She spoke solemnly ; and Mr. Meadows looked at her, surprised, struck by the sound of her voice so unusual.

“ God above us knows with what reluctance I have conceded,” said Mr. Meadows, raising his eyes to Heaven. “ My poor girl ! dutiful, affectionate, grateful ! I shall never hear a murmur from her, I know — even if she be wretched. However, I have given my consent. It must be done—fetch Adeline hither ! ”

Mrs. Meadows went up-stairs. Adeline, from her own room, flew to meet her on the landing-place.

“ The course of true love,” muttered Mrs. Meadows to herself, “ has run smooth for once. Adeline, my love, it is all settled. My darling, I wish you had had that blue lute-string made by Miss Harden, instead

Miss Loyd. Stanhope was admiring Miss Harden's make. But come, love, you know that Stanhope is here. He begs I will call him Stanhope, and I expect he will call me Louisa. — Your father wishes to see you, darling, down stairs." She drew the trembling girl with her. Mr. Meadows was sitting in the parlour in deep thought.

"My dear, leave us together. Adeline, my child, when I forbade your correspondence with Mr. Stanhope Floyer, it was for your welfare I acted. I could have wished that time had changed your inclinations. Are they unaltered?"

"They are," returned Adeline, in a trembling voice: "but, my dear father, I am willing to resign them, rather than to make my only parent unhappy."

She wept for some moments in her father's arms.

"I have given my consent to *him*," said Mr. Meadows. "I give it now to both. I have provided, Adeline, fully, for your comfort. At my death,"—he wiped a tear from his eyes, "you will be richer. Mr. Floyer's circumstances are now tolerably prosperous—tolerably," he repeated to himself.

Mr. Meadows opened a door as he spoke,

and in an instant appeared one of those bright visages and graceful, manly forms, which are seen among the aristocracy of proud England:—a young man sprang forward. It was Stanhope Floyer.

Mr. Meadows took the hand of his daughter in his. “Mr. Floyer,” he said, with deep emphasis, “my child has suffered much on your account. Repay her by the devotion of your life.”

“I will, sir,” cried the young man, pressing the hand which was given to him, to his lips. “If I do not, sir—but no, I will not utter the word if—it is impossible!”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS.

VOL. II.

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W I D O W S
AND
W I D O W E R S.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

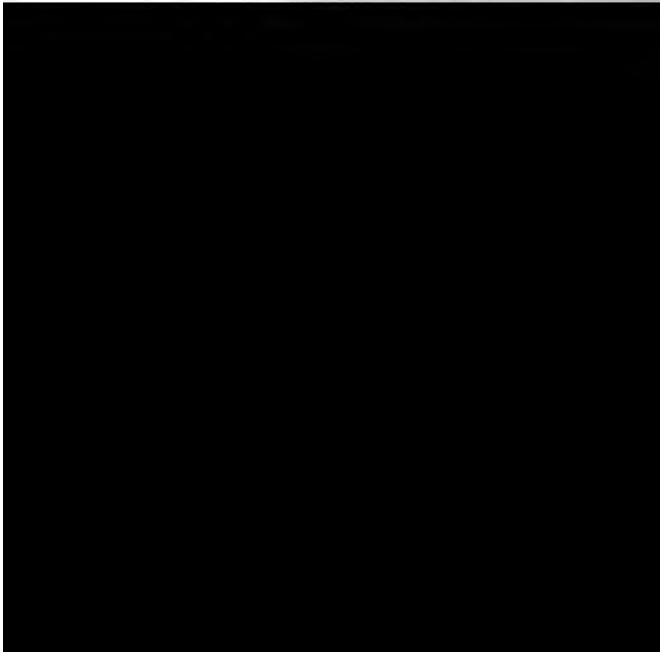
BY
MRS. THOMSON,
AUTHRESS OF "CONSTANCE," "ANNE BOLEYN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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1842.



WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS.

CHAPTER I.

"I long woo'd your daughter,—my suit you denied ;—
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide."

SCOTT.

NOTHING is so proverbially dismal as a wedding-day. The "happy" bride and bridegroom look anything but happy. Fathers and mothers are mournful; even sisters think they have a right to shed farewell tears. Congratulations are doleful ditties; they imply much of sorrow beneath the forcing-pump which they who utter them employ to bring up joy. A marriage is rather the termination of a long season of disturbance and annoyance about settlements, house-furnishing, and dress, than the commencement of a happy era. Conjugal felicity must really be dated from the end of the first year or two, when the couple

have learned to run well together over the rough roads and by-paths of life. I doubt whether there is the actual *ennui*, and heart-felt melancholy, at most funerals, that many would, if they dared, confess to at a marriage.

There are exceptions; and Mrs. Meadows was supremely happy on the day when Adeline became the bride of Stanhope Floyer. Lady Theodora was calmly happy; and the boys and girls who hung in clusters on the palings round the churchyard, and the women of the village who gossiped about the event all day, were happy. Further, I would not take upon my conscience to affirm. The bride and bridegroom, who for weeks supplied Northington with conversation, proceeded to London, where, contrary to the expectation of Mr. Stanhope Floyer's relatives, they passed a year, never even visiting Woodcote Grange for a day. I do not propose to dilate very minutely on this period of their married life; first, because I consider it as a period probationary, or preparatory, to the rest of their existence; secondly, because if I were to recount in close detail the individual feelings of this ill-assorted pair, it would be a chronicle of disagreeables. True, as such, faithful and applicable to many hearts with

which the stranger intermeddles not; but, like the details of a fever, or the recorded symptoms of a chronic disease, more curious than profitable.

Let me, then, take that licence which has been permitted to abler pens:—suppose eighteen months to have elapsed since Adeline quitted her former home, beautiful, confiding, and beloved. And was she beloved? Did she ever receive from the husband to whom the best years of her life were devoted, the affection which she bestowed? Let those who know the heart of the libertine and of the selfish man, answer that question for themselves. There is, undoubtedly, a sort of love even in their breasts; but it is the dew-drop without its clearness, the flower without its freshness; it is love without constancy, or depth, or purity.

Some few observations must here be made on the state of society at the period when Adeline was introduced into that portion of the fashionable world which her husband called his “set.” It was before the turbid atmosphere of revolutionary France had settled into a calm. It was when the splendour of talent was permitted in public life to throw a gloss over depravity. It was when the

passion for gaming was at its greatest excess in this country, — never, perhaps, had it so thoroughly imbued the higher classes. Possibly it will always exist; but then it was unblushingly practised, often with avowed dishonour. It was before intemperance had begun to be deemed ill-breeding; when third-bottle men had a sort of respect attached to their proficiency; it was when scepticism gave the tone to the conversation of the lettered; when a religious man, — a being, thanks to Providence! now often to be met with even in the highest classes, — was an exception to his fellow-mortals. It was when periodical literature, that great test of the taste of the times, was either meagre and frivolous, or gross to such a degree, that, even in searching for the customs and opinions of former days, it is impossible to read it without disgust. It was when the clergy were supine, and the advocates of infidelity bold and zealous. It was — and perhaps most strongly was that feature marked, — when women were dressed dolls, elaborate in their persons, slovenly in their minds; skilful at the crimping of a frill or in the colouring of a comfit, but remarkably awkward at orthography and grammar; and, what was incomparably worse, without that

love of knowledge for essentially employing time which preserves the mind from vanity, — the door-keeper to vice.

There was nothing zoological or horticultural in those days, therefore all the *beau monde* was collected in Ranelagh. It was during one brilliant evening, when the boasted beauties of whom our grandsires raved were pacing round and round, some in plumes, — for royalty had but just withdrawn, — many blazing with diamonds, most rouged, but few, happily, powdered, that the admired and extolled Mrs. Stanhope Floyer was seen in eager search of some person. A young, a very young man, with a fair complexion, deep blue eyes, and a nervous, tremulous voice and manner, was in attendance upon one who, in that age of killing characters, had, at present, escaped unslandered.

“ I have found you at last, my dear Mrs. Neville,” was Adeline’s exclamation on perceiving the object of her search.

Mrs. Neville was standing in the centre of a circle of gentlemen, her usual situation, when Adeline, with far more courage than usual, came forward, and, in presence of the whole assembly, offered her her hand.

“ Did you see that ? ” whispered Sir Tufton

Tyrawley to Mrs. Lawson, who was sitting, for air, near a window.

“ Yes, and I perfectly understand it. After all that has been said and published about Stanhope Floyer and Mrs. Neville, these advances are to show that our friend has unbounded confidence in *her* friend. It is just like her : she is a generous creature ! ”

“ Poor thing ! ” was Sir Tufton’s reply : and then he sat down near his cousin, and took out his opera-glass to gaze at Mrs. Neville.

She was reputed to be a handsome woman, belonging to a good family, but who had made an imprudent marriage. Most people thought she would not have been sorry to have retraced her steps, but they were quite mistaken. It was much the same to Mrs. Neville whom she married, for she had no notion of submitting to the received opinion, that a married woman should be content with the admiration of her husband. She was a person who fascinated most men, and it was quite problematic how, — for her face was by no means beautiful, and had already begun to show the wear-and-tear of time ; her figure had become coarse ; her dark bright eyes were somewhat dimmed by rouge and late hours ; her white arms and

her unrivalled foot remained unimpaired ; but there was a vivacity in her smile, and a quickness in her remarks, that accounted for some portion of the immense adulation lavished upon her.

Much allowance is to be made for the excitement which admiration produces in the young and free ; it is rather a defect of character to be wholly insensible to the natural desire of pleasing : but wherefore married women, mothers, moving within the pale of respectability, should not only value the tributes of the dissolute, but forfeit peace of mind, good report, the communion of their own pure sex, and various other mightier considerations, for the worship of that sex, which never really loves where it does not *respect*, is really a matter of wonderment !

“Mrs. Neville has not *quite* lost her character ?” asked Mrs. Lawson of her husband.

“Oh, dear no ; she is perfectly respectable,” said Mr. Lawson, hurrying away, as he always did, from his wife’s society.

“And the more dangerous,” thought Mrs. Lawson ; “if she had lost it, people would shun her. I think such characters should be unmasked.”

Mrs. Lawson rose and paraded the room with Sir Tufton. Wherever they went, they heard comments on the satisfactory result of Mrs. Floyer's *rencontre* with Mrs. Neville. She, at least, acquitted the accused of the slander. Mrs. Neville's character was patched up, and so it always was, until she descended, with all her imperfections, to her grave, and then the patches were ripped off the surface, and the real nature of her actions was mercilessly disclosed by a world fond of biography.

Woe to the woman who has secrets in her heart that none must read! the peace of married-life disturbed;—the innocence of the young victim made a snare for her corrupting wiles;—the vanity of the old called into play, that prodigality might walk hand-in-hand with folly;—the young wife stricken with jealousy, spleen, envy, hatred,—all the bad passions excited by the undue influence which her talents, or her person, acquired; and yet—and yet, Mrs. Neville was perfectly respectable!

Mrs. Lawson went home in her carriage with Adeline that night. Lawson and Floyer had disappeared together. Neither of the innocent and beautiful women whom they thus

left were very cheerful. But Mrs. Lawson was not disturbed by her own matrimonial infelicity. She grieved that her friend should be running the same career as she had witnessed, and, in part, shared;—improvidence, difficulty, want, ruin;—the two first, both Mrs. Lawson and Adeline had partially tasted, the latter might not be long averted,—love, distrust, jealousy, disclosure,—Mrs. Lawson had got over these, and had arrived at the goal—indifference. She regarded her friend as if surmounting some dangerous Alpine pass; and felt that she should be glad when it was over.

“Did you see Eustace Floyer, to-night?” Millicent inquired, as Mrs. Floyer’s carriage stopped at her door.

“Yes, for an instant. I don’t think—I fear he and Stanhope are not on such good terms as they used to be, and I do not know why.”

Mrs. Lawson made no reply, and in a few moments mutual “good-nights” were uttered; and Adeline entered her home.

She stole up to her room, almost ashamed to give the usual reply to her servant in the hall,—“No, do not lock the doors yet! Mr. Floyer will not be home just yet!”

Heavens! what a change, from the respectable routine of her father's house! Night turned into day; the master and mistress of the house never going out together—never coming in together—never knowing each other's engagements. These were fashionable errors! but worse, much worse might be said, if the veil which shrouded domestic infelicity were raised but in part.

Adeline entered her dressing-room; and, being released from her plumes and gems, sat down, contrary to her custom, to wait for Stanhope Floyer's coming home. It was now, as she remembered with a sigh, drawing near to the second anniversary of that nuptial day which had once been the fondest theme of her hopes. Since that day she had seen what is termed, "a great deal of the world." She had entered that world, as most young women do, blinded by affection. It had been long ere the veil was removed from her eyes; but it was now wholly withdrawn. She sat and mused on all that was disclosed by the prospect.

The extraordinary influence which Mr. Lawson had attained over the mind of her husband, formed the subject of her reflections; for she regarded that influence as the secret source of

all Stanhope Floyer's errors. Mr. Lawson and he had been acquainted for years. When Stanhope had first possessed the control of his own fortune, he had met with Lawson; he had assisted the adventurer with money; he had become security for him; he had even suffered losses, not only of property, but of character, on Lawson's account; yet was he still as much infatuated with him as ever; — still ready to rush into every imprudence and every vice to which Lawson beckoned the way. The effects of such a course were visible on Floyer; he had already lost the credit which his marriage, and the mysterious settlement of his debts had acquired. He was losing the semblance of a gentleman; his habits were intemperate, reckless, and in every way discreditable. His person, still a model of beauty, had become slovenly; his eye and air told of the nocturnal wassail, and of the self-entailed anxiety which a gamester incurs.

Adeline had very gradually become aware of the real state of affairs. Gradually, the irreclaimable self-indulgence, the laxity of principle, the depravation of taste which ensue from such courses, became manifest to her. She could scarcely recognize the lover

of her youth, the light-hearted, gentlemanly, and fascinating Floyer, in the impetuous, harassed, and libertine being to whom she was united. She still fondly loved him; and she knew, and felt, that whilst he was censured for his inconstancy to a beautiful and confiding wife, his truest affections were hers. Yes! whilst his passions were influenced by others, his love,—she believed, his respect,—still centred in his wife.

She had suffered in that short period much more than she ever believed she could have endured. She had borne the conviction that no sacrifice of inclination for her sake was to be expected from the selfish libertine. She had sustained in secret the harrowing pangs of jealousy, and they had been deadened by repetition. She had discovered, when the knot could not be undone, that she had married a man without character or estimation in the world. She found him degraded in society; noticed, indeed, occasionally by his equals, but intimate only with his inferiors. She saw him, what she most mourned, indifferent to raising himself from a sphere of taint and infection. All power of self-denial was gone. Freed from his debts one day, he had plunged into

extravagances and consequent difficulty the next. What a truly good and venerable man has written, from personal knowledge, of Sheridan, might be applied to Stanhope Floyer;—"He never denied himself anything, so at last he could deny himself nothing; the power of self-restraint was gone." The creature was abandoned to his passions!

Whilst Adeline still sat, even until the grey light stole through the blinds of her dressing-room, a knock was heard at the door. Her husband—she knew from frequent watching his very mode of entering,—advanced into the hall. Slowly and heavily he ascended the stairs, and then turned into his own dressing-room,—and here Adeline sought him.

Mr. Floyer averted his head as she entered; but finding she did not retire, looked round, exclaiming, as if awaiting her explanation of her appearance—"Well?"

"Where, where have you been?" asked Adeline, in a tremulous voice.

"Where have I been?—with Lawson, of course."

"And with—at Mrs. Neville's?"

"Certainly,—we could not make up our loo-table without her set."

“Stanhope!” cried Adeline, “hear me. When I yesterday put into your hands the slanderous papers in which your name was coupled in terms of infamy with *hers*, I proffered my firm assurance that I believed not those allegations. You gave me your honour that I was right.”

“Of course—what does the world know against Mrs. Neville?” was the evasive reply.

“God knows!” exclaimed Adeline, raising her clasped hands, and looking upwards. “I desire not to judge her; yet, Stanhope! as I quitted the Rotunda to-night, after that I had, in public, offered her my hand, after that I had sought by my humble meed of respect to show my confidence, she—”

“And what then?” asked Floyer, gazing with some emotion at his wife, whose face was now buried in her hands.

“I heard her address you, *so*. She knew not that I was behind you both in the crowd, when, as you thought, all were engaged with their own discourse and heeded you not, I, the injured one, the confiding wife, and friend,—to *me* your mutual feelings were disclosed.”

“I reproach you not,” she resumed, after a deep sad pause; for the stricken Floyer attempted not to vindicate himself—“I never

mean to speak of it again. To my father— O God! not to *him* will it be ever breathed. All I ask, I insist, if you do not wish me to desert you, if you would not throw away all remnant of reputation, all hope of retrieving our ruined prospects,—never allow that faithless friend to cross my path. And now, and now 'tis done. To-morrow you will see me here, here still, Stanhope, in our home; in spite of my threats of frenzy, I do intend better things. Leave me but to myself for a few days, let me but recover—!” She burst into a passion of tears, and 'ere her conscious-smitten husband could utter a word, she was gone.

This was one—this was but one—of many nocturnal scenes, of which none save the erring husband and wretched wife, none save the unsleeping guardian angels who watch, we are told, the good, were cognizant.

November was passing away, another season of giddy pleasures was about to draw on; Adeline had now quite ceased to solicit her husband to occupy his own seat, Woodcote, which Mr. Eustace Floyer had generously purchased, and restored to him. She would not for worlds be in the vicinity of her father.

She wondered at her friend Mrs. Lawson's indifference to the career of Mr. Lawson; for Millicent was as fond of dress, drums, quadrilles, and the Rotunda, as ever. But then the workings of the passions were not visible in Mr. Lawson; there were no lines of care on *his* face; not a plait of his matchless ruffles seemed the less exact, not a curl of his hair was discomposed, even after the most protracted nocturnal revels. The tempter looked all seemly, and went smiling through a world in which his victims, to the right and to the left, were paying the penalty for sins of which he had sowed the seed. The world talked of certain misdemeanours of Mr. Lawson; reports were breathed, but only *breathed*; and the sky of his reputation was overcast without its ever coming to a storm.

Amongst Lawson's victims there was one whose career Adeline had watched with a melancholy interest. He was named Tresham, the son of a clergyman in a remote county, and he held a small place under government. Scarcely, as one would have thought, worth leading astray, the young man possessed accomplishments which gave zest to the gay society into which Mr. Lawson, with much

pretended zeal and friendship, introduced him. He had a fine voice, and a perfect taste in singing—one of those singers to whom voice is, perhaps, the least attribute — but whose style is perfect; sentimental, correct, and impassioned. His countenance and person corresponded to the feminine attributes of his mind; those large, blue, appealing eyes, that tremulous voice, those elegant, though timid, movements, how fondly were they remembered when the object of fruitless regret was laid in his grave, the grave of—but I must not anticipate coming events—by the fond, though poor parents who sent him, trusting in his innocence and affection that he would return to them unscathed.

It was well that they had no mirror in which to view the absent; it was well they knew not the gradual, corrupting process by which Lawson and his associates beat down every principle within young Tresham's mind. It was well that they knew not the paroxysms of self-reproach, the hours of dread and gloom, which succeeded to the wild excitement of feverish pleasures. There was a gentleness, a kindness, a sympathy in the youth's character, a sweetness of manner that *sometimes* caused a momentary regret in those

who saw his decline from simplicity into folly; — but reflection was not the order of the day.

“I would give much,” thought Adeline, “if I could save that poor young man from his doom. Yet, how—how can I warn him against my husband? or, how dare I to encounter Mr. Lawson’s vengeance?”

“Adeline,” said Mr. Stanhope Floyer, one morning when, deeply engaged in her own reflections, she was sitting in her dressing-room, “I am going down to — to hunt; the Lawsons are going. I leave it to your own choice, whether to remain in London or to join us.”

—He spoke in a tone which might imply, “you had better remain here.”

Adeline begged for a few hours’ consideration. During that interval she had no friend from whom she could seek advice. She trusted to her own judgment, and she decided to go into the country.

She had now become habituated to witness those subterfuges which are made to evade the payment of just debts. Debt! What a demoralizer thou art! How soon the nice sense of honour breaks down before the law of necessity! To what debasing

stratagems, to what paltry pretences, does the once upright mind descend under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties?

Mr. Meadows had given Adeline her fortune in the form of allowance settled strictly on herself; and with this income, intended for her dress and for her private expenses, all household matters were rigidly defrayed by her. She knew not, she dared not, calculate the extent of those new difficulties into which the gaming-table and the turf had again reduced her husband.

“But,” she argued within herself, “my father warned me of the risk I ran in marrying the object of my choice. I have framed my own destiny; and I will not, whilst one vestige of what is good remains, desert poor Stanhope. If I leave him to those who are his bane I do not fulfil my duty as a wife. Leave him! — leave him!” she repeated to herself; “where can I go? Where will not *his* welfare be ever my sole object of existence? Where can I forget the brief hours of happiness I have enjoyed? Besides,” she repeated to herself, as she arranged the minor articles of her wardrobe for her journey, “how can I ever return to Northington — to society for which I am

no longer fit—which is no longer suited to me?”

A journey of two days brought Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope Floyer into the neighbourhood of a provincial town, and of a pack of hounds; and they settled themselves in a ready-furnished house, adapted for the convenience of those who followed the great business of life, hunting and betting. The Lawsons went on a visit to a nobleman in the neighbourhood of sporting celebrity; Sir Tufton withdrew to Northington, for he did not like “the set;” and Mr. Tresham promised shortly to follow his friends to —.

Serene and simple was the little town of Swindon when the nobleman whom Mr. Lawson visited had altered a small house into a spacious residence, and shed the poison of his influence on the place. It was true, that he brought much custom to the town. Stables let high, the inns were converted into hotels, the small tradespeople put up fresh boards over their shops. The long barber’s pole, which extended across the street, was succeeded by the words “Perfumer and Hairdresser;” the mercers became linendrapers and haberdashers; the sempstresses, dress and habitmakers; the music and dancingmasters

rose into professors; but most throve the farrier, who grew forthwith into "a veterinary surgeon!" Red coats besplashed with mud were for ever dashing through the once quiet streets; carriages were rolling at night to balls and masquerades given by Lord Mauley; all places were thronged by his inmates — except his lordship's pew at church — that was desolate as heretofore.

It was thought a great thing for quiet Swindon that this nobleman chose to bring a pack of hounds, with all their appurtenances of vice, to the very precincts. Long has it been remembered! — long has the father had to mourn over the snares successfully laid for his young daughter. The aged mother remembers still that her boys were steady, until grooms, and jockeys, and coachmen, initiated them into depravity. The tottering old man at the almshouse leans over the stone-topped wall, and muses on the epoch when his honesty first broke down. He took the bribe — and for what? Who was the tempter? Old man, go to thy prayers; nor recal, for 'tis now in vain, the days when thou couldst look thy neighbour in the face, and walk to church, and hear what the parson said without a creeping o'er

thine old bones, and a blush upon thy wrinkled brow!

But this was all for the good of the town. Long, long did its interests prosper under the patronage of Lord Mauley, and when he left it for a noble seat which accrued to him through inheritance, the poor inhabitants proffered him an humble address of gratitude for all that he had effected in their favour.

One morning, whilst Adeline was gathering the primroses which grew in patches on a bank near her temporary home, a hale old gentleman, in a green single-breasted coat, and with a well-powdered wig, rode up to the gate followed by two servants. It was Lord Mauley, he rode in — he entered — he was received by Mr. Floyer, and he unfolded the object of his visit—an invitation to a ball at Swindon. The invitation was accepted, and the venerable nobleman rode away.

“What a respectable-looking fatherly old man!” was Adeline’s exclamation to Mrs. Lawson, who came in soon afterwards with her husband. “Surely, he must give a grace even to the pursuits which he patronizes.”

“Don’t say too much on that point,” cried

Millicent, laughing; "Lord Mauley has too many good qualities not to cause one to wish his early history to be forgotten."

"Oh, he's a capital fellow," cried Stanhope; "just what a nobleman ought to be."

"Except to his wife, Mr. Floyer. Poor lady! I remember her at Bath, — that was her last appearance. Since then she has been in confinement; and 'tis said, his infidelities broke her heart. She never complained, but —"

"And why dwell on the past?" cried Mr. Lawson. "There was a great deal of fault on her side you may be sure. The absurdity of her being jealous! A woman only exposes herself to derision by showing such feelings: there cannot be a better man than Lord Mauley in the universe."

"— Nor a better managed pack of hounds," said Stanhope Floyer, "nor better arranged dinners."

"But do ladies, then, visit at his lordship's house?" enquired Adeline.

"The whole county," said Mr. Lawson. "What have people to do with Lord Mauley's peculiarities? He is only like other men, except that he happens to have been found out."

Adeline shuddered. Of late there had been

an undisguised profligacy in the tone of Mr. Lawson's sentiments, an open abandonment of decorum, that seemed a kind of insult to female delicacy. She looked at Millicent; Millicent took everything gaily, and laughed at the gravity of her friend.

“All the rank and beauty, and *respectability*, of — shire will be collected at Swindon on Wednesday,” said Mr. Lawson, drawing near to Adeline, and gazing undauntedly in her face. “Mrs. Floyer, pardon me—no one can admire more than I do the amiable prudence, the interesting modesty of your manners. But beware of setting up yourself on high;—I hope I am not saying what is not perfectly respectful: the world will talk of the *very* righteous—the point of a pinnacle is no safe footing.” He smiled as he spoke, and threw into the real sarcasm of his speech the air of kind counsels.

Adeline recoiled at his approach; her soft eye was lowered before his calm, bold stare: her gentleness was easily crushed; but her love for one, even weaker than herself—her resolution to lose no opportunity of displaying the character of Lawson in its true colours to her husband, armed her with unwonted courage.

“I am not so blind, Mr. Lawson,” she said, gravely, “as you may, perhaps, deem me. I am very ignorant of society—of society so different to the simple but honest people with whom my youth was passed.” She paused, for a recurrence to home shook her with momentary emotion. “But I know right from wrong. I have of late learned to discern error from guilt; and I have seen enough of the world to be certain that there is no danger in decorum: if there be any, the woman who is conscious of right intentions may defy it.”

“True, very true,” answered Mr. Lawson, bowing low. “I always admire Mrs. Floyer’s *sentiments*.”

“’Tis a pity,” he whispered, as he took Stanhope Floyer by the arm, and led him into the garden, “that with all her excellent notions, Mrs. Floyer suffers that boy, Tresham, to dawdle about her so continually.”

Stanhope Floyer dismissed the insinuation with “Pooh, pooh,” nor did it arise to his recollection whilst he was master of his reason, nor whilst the still ascendant influence of his blameless Adeline arrested his precipitate course to ruin, and hallowed the home where she continued to preside.

CHAPTER II.

"To Friendship didst thou trust thy fame,
And was thy friend a deadly foe,
Who stole into thy breast, to aim
A surer blow?"

MONTGOMERY.

A FEW days after this conversation, Adeline was surprised by the sudden appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Meadows before her gates. She was alone in her room, when, beyond a belt of laurestinuses, and driving slowly up

Mrs. Meadows, smarter than ever, with a sky-blue silk pelisse, an amber hat with green flowers, a pug dog in one hand, and with the other handing out Mr. Meadows, with a flannel stocking drawn all over his shoe and up to his knee, made the lane resound with her voice.

“Well, here we are! God bless you! God bless you! How are you? how are you, Sally?” nodding to the servant. “Dick here still, I see. Why, poor Papa’s had a fit of gout, and he’s in the dumps; so we are going to Bath: but, between ourselves,” she whispered to Adeline, “it’s Loftus’s and Mrs. Loftus’s uncommon bad conduct.”

“My dear father,” exclaimed Adeline, fondly clinging to his neck.

Homely as her relatives were, there was a cordiality, an honesty, a respectability in their very aspect, to which she had for a long time been a stranger. Even their old-fashioned, steady looking, servant,—even the fat, pampered horses,—even the stupid, blind, old coach-dog combined to mark the contrast between the flashy, insolent footmen, and animals of high pretensions, by which Mr. Stanhope Floyer’s set was surrounded.

“He’s quite lame!” said Mrs. Meadows

to Adeline, as she saw the anxious look of the still affectionate daughter; "but remarkably cheerful at times; a'n't you, dear? There;—our darling Adeline will let you put your poor foot upon her sweet little couch. What he takes is a teaspoonful of brandy, a little sugar, half a glass of good sherry, and a wine-glass of warm water: all beaten up together. Oh, I forgot — an egg — we mustn't leave the part of Hamlet out by particular desire, must we love?"

"My dear," replied Mr. Meadows, with a fidgety movement of his hand, "don't talk just in my ear, and see that they don't take the horses out. We have engaged beds at the Black Bull, Adeline, in Swindon. No remonstrances, if you please. Mr. Stanhope Floyer is very much the gentleman, I have no doubt; but his habits and mine wouldn't suit, love, wouldn't suit."

"Dear Stanhope! he'll be quite vexed," said Mrs. Meadows. "Don't be frightened about your papa, don't," she whispered, making faces to Adeline to prevent her from looking anxious.

"And you're quite well and comfortable, love?" asked Mr. Meadows, looking earnestly at his daughter. "Late hours, I dare say."

“You guess so, sir, perhaps, by my pale face,” replied Adeline, trying to smile, and endeavouring to evade the question. “Had he known of your coming, Stanhope, perhaps, would have been here to receive you.”

“Why, he never can pay his father-in-law too much attention,” said Louisa, bluntly. “I can’t tell you what we have gone through with Loftus and Mrs. Loftus! Fancy his being taken in with Susan Haines, a girl six years older than himself: quite an affront to you and me, love; for she’s more fit to be our mother. And just imagine the indelicacy of the thing—her going to Wolstone to be married! Mrs. Smallwood and I don’t speak in consequence. That’s been the upshot of the business.”

Mr. Meadows groaned. “Loftus, who knew he business of the office,” he muttered in a low voice, “to send a circular to my clients I feel to be an act of the deepest ingratitude. I have no longer a son.”

A pause followed this desponding speech. “—Fancy Mrs. Loftus receiving her visits in lodgings!” resumed Mrs. Meadows. “Mr. Haines’s servant went over to hand the chocolate;—and they giving it out that your dear, noble, generous father would not allow

them enough! There have been two to one against them!"

"Poor Brooksbank," said Mr. Meadows, as he took the compound prescribed for him by conjugal care, "has been sadly cut-up about it. Of course we and the Haineses don't exchange visits now! Northington is a sad altered place; there are but two families that will receive the communion on the same day, if they know it."

"I should like Mrs. Loftus to see these grounds," said Louisa, looking out of the window. "I should like the Smallwoods to see the style you live in; and to know how thoroughly we all despise their twopenny-halfpenny footboys, their parties, and their— But, bless me! what a charming, fresh-complexioned young-old man is coming in at the gates. He's looking at *me!*" And Louisa pulled down a stray ringlet or two. "He's coming in. You don't think me *too* stout, dear Adeline? Mrs. Loftus calls me coarse." She stopped short, for at this instant the stout, healthy old gentleman made his appearance, introduced as Lord Mauley.

Mr. Meadows set down the cup and saucer in his hand precipitately; and the ardent Louisa hid it behind the sofa. Adeline rose

with the grace which intercourse with the world had rendered habitual, and introduced her father to Lord Mauley.

“Lord who?” whispered Louisa to Adeline. “Indeed! just the society I like.”

Lord Mauley, extolled as the best fellow in the world, and courted as if he had been the most agreeable, was one of that description of old men whose words slip, as it were, out of their mouths, without premeditation. It was a point of manners in the old school never to let the conversation flag; and this was the only point of good manners which he practised.

“Mrs. Lawson tells me, Mrs. Floyer, that you don’t mean to come to my little dance. Now I am calling expressly to say”—here the light-blue eye of the hale old peer glanced round at Mr. and Mrs. Meadows—“that I shall take it particularly obliging if you will. There will be a great many people that you know. There are the Stricklands, the Maudes, there’s Archdeacon Wilson and his family,” added the wary nobleman, “and their sons; you know their sons, don’t you? Very worthy men, both in the church. I shall be excessively disappointed if you won’t come. And if you can make it agreeable

to your friends to bring them with you, I shall feel so much the more honoured. It's prodigiously cold, isn't it? but you're well sheltered here. Wednesday, the 25th, the 25th, good morning, good morning." He bowed severally to Mr. and Mrs. Meadows.

"My lord, good morning, my lord," said Mr. Meadows, standing up on one leg.

"Good morning, my lord. Don't trouble yourself to shut the door, my footman will do that, my lord," cried Mrs. Meadows, with her sweetest smile, responsive to my lord's low bow.

"Well! what an honour! That is an honour! And what a charming, delightful man! my Lord Mauley! Mauley, Mau—oh! quite an ornament to his station, any how. He has taken an extreme fancy to us. What would Mrs. Loftus say?—what *would* Mrs. Loftus say?"

"—Well now! we must go to his ball, Mr. M. Bath can do without us for a few days, and Adeline can chaperon me, even should your shoe not come on by that time. It's excessively polite; but my Lord Mauley will be hurt if we don't go."

She was interrupted by the announcement that the horses had been baited, and were

standing at the door. The horses were quite as much the masters over Mr. Meadows, as they were over the worthy associates of Stanhope Floyer, and the old gentleman immediately rose to receive his "wraps." First, a scarf tied over his ears, under his hand; then his spenser put on; then a comforter wound round his throat; then his worsted gloves; afterwards his cloak; and eventually, after a consultation in which Louisa prevailed, some huge galligaskins to prevent splashes. Thus guarded, Mr. Meadows set off for the Black Bull, where a roast-fowl was ordered at three. It was some time before the whole concern, horses, carriage, dog, maid, invalid, and all could be settled rightly and put into motion; at length they moved, at the rate of two miles an hour, down the lane towards Swindon.

Adeline was relieved by the security that her father could know little of her actual situation, at Swindon. Mr. Floyer's late hours, and the state of excitement, not to be called inebriation, in which he often returned in the dead of night, would have driven Mr. Meadows mad. Her father was not, she thought, in a state to encounter any new disappointment; and the bitterest pang

came across her when she reflected how much concern she had caused him in resisting his wishes; how judicious had been his opposition; how just, in many respects, his views. How truly her wilfulness had brought its retribution. "No, whilst I can bear it, I will;" was her secret resolution.

Yet there were moments in which she could have willingly poured into Mrs. Meadows' ear the secret grief which she would fain conceal from her father. For her mother-in-law—now that the one point was gained—now that she had reached the dignity of wife-ship—was the same good-natured friend as Adeline had formerly found her! very soothing, very gossiping, very inquisitive. Her visits to the Black Bull were among the few pleasant recollections which Adeline retained of Swindon. There was her father, the same as ever, scanning every article of the Inn bill, but paying it every morning, and feeing chambermaids, waiters, and hostlers with old-fashioned liberality, but not scattering money by handfuls, to compensate for nightly revels, or to blind the good innkeeper to the certainty that his sum total might never be discharged. There was an even-handed principle throughout; the poor boots was remembered as well

as the smart waiter. Dinner was ordered at a certain hour, and if Mr. and Mrs. Meadows were at the top of a hill, they would have descended at the best rate they could, to have sat down the very instant that the clock struck. How comfortable was that inn-parlour, with its goose-tongued aloes, and glossy myrtles in the window, a broad window-seat, well adapted for Mrs. Meadows' convenience, and for seeing the hunters, as they set out in the morning from Lord Maulley's, and came back in the afternoon. How bright were the fire-irons; how clean the Dutch tiles round the old-fashioned fire-place, how well-behaved even the cat. Then those pictures, so inspiring, of 'Squire Meynell and his fox-hounds, or of Mr. Corbet and his harriers, all in full action, which were hung opposite—by way of redemption for the soul-stirring subjects,—to a coloured print of Isaac blessing Jacob, and of Joseph and his brethren. How savoury was the dinner, how neat the tea-equipage, how boiling the kettle, how civil the waiter!

“I am so glad we came to the Bull!” was Mrs. Meadows' constant exclamation; “and, I assure you, Mrs. Hodgetts doesn't think the less of us that we are going to my lord's ball.

What a charming, noble-minded man my lord is! He gave an ox last week at the mop, in addition to the town's own. He bespoke a play, and sent the poor actors twenty pounds:—they got ten pounds more candles, Mrs. Hobbes says, directly. Poor creatures! I saw Hamlet last night buying gingerbread at that stall, and looking very, very hungry—and 'Juliet,' as the men call Miss Mandeville, from Bath—with slipshod shoes. There's going to be a play to-night, bespoke by someone. But, Adeline, there's such a love of a woman rides by everyday to see the hounds throw off!—I wish *I* had my habit here.—She's about my size, with small features, and dark eyes; and the men are all about her everlastingly."

"I don't know who she is at all."

"Then you can tell me who an angel of a man is,—a Mr. Lawson,—who always smiles and looks up here. He's great with my lord, I am told. The house is full of company—fifteen bed-rooms occupied. There are ten pair of strange horses in the stables, and four coaches in the coach-houses. There are six ladies' maids in the house, and, I am told, twenty grooms. My lord hasn't room for all his friends: there's two gentlemen lodge at

the 'Red Lion,'—there's one here. It's incredible what my lord does for the place, and how good a friend he's been to Swindon. Look, look! there are the red coats,—there! Who's that?—why, our dear Stanhope, to be sure; and that's the lady he's always with."

Adeline leaned far out of the window to look after them; when she drew in her head her face was pale as death. Mr. Meadows remarked it for once. "You had better go to Bath with us, my dear Adeline," he said, kindly. "I suppose we must go to this gay ball, but ——"

"O yes, to be sure!" cried Mrs. Meadows: "Lord Mauley would, indeed, be offended;—and I should like the Loftuses to see our names in the county paper. By-the-by, Adeline, I've never told you half the affair."

"The affair" occupied the best part of an hour. All that had been written, rumoured, said, done, thought in the Loftus affair, was revived. Loftus had behaved vilely,—his wife abominably; and Mrs. Meadows took her leave of the subject, declaring that she might forgive—she never would forget.

It was no easy matter for Adeline, now, to effect an interview with her husband, alone:

when she did succeed in obtaining a five minutes' conversation with him, she began by entering her protest against attending Lord Mauley's ball.

"Do as you like: all the county is to be there. But if you prefer staying at home — Now, hang it! Adeline, you've taken to crying lately — I don't ask you to go to the ball — I don't wish you to stay away. Lord Mauley's a very good friend of mine; and I don't suppose you will let Mrs. Meadows go and expose herself there alone."

"No: but if I absent myself my father must know the reason!" exclaimed Adeline.

She spoke in momentary passion.—"Forgive me!" she added, an instant afterwards. "No, no, Stanhope, I will not do it! You may break this heart, if you will, — and break I think it must, but it will be in silence."

"Then do not give countenance to common reports," said Stanhope, moodily.

"With regard to Mrs. Neville? Did I not reject every suspicion? — have I not, in public, offered her my hand? Oh! if she knew the agony she has caused me, she would not, surely she would not trifle with my happiness, for it cannot ensure hers. But I have taken my resolution. She may be innocent, — or what she calls innocent. God grant it

may be so! But where there is no decorum, there is seldom virtue."

"I do not speak of Mrs. Neville!" returned Mr. Floyer, colouring. "You are jealous, Adeline, and therefore—but don't, for God's sake! let us begin on that score again. But there are other reports.

"Of whom?" asked Adeline, her eye fixing itself wildly upon her husband.

"Of a fool! that is all. I believe not a syllable of them. Let us be friends!"

"Ah, Stanhope!" cried Adeline, whilst all the love of early days, before grim matrimony had scared away affection, rushed into her head, "I, indeed, cannot help being friends; and often, in spite of my struggles to repress such thoughts, I have a conviction that I shall one day be your only friend." She threw her arms round his neck. "Do not try me too severely, Stanhope; if you *are* no longer mine in heart, let me not know it. If you wish it—if there are reports which you wish silenced,—I will go to the ball."

"I don't know why and wherefore you are unhappy, Adeline," said Mr. Floyer, softened by her grief; "I don't know why you should repine at your lot. You might have married a richer man, perhaps."

"Do not speak on the subject again, dear

Stanhope; you cannot — you cannot understand my feelings. I never, never loved anyone but you. For two years before I married, you were the daily, hourly, subject of my thoughts. However you may treat me, I can never change in any way; —'tis not the same thing with you. You know I was not aware of what had occurred before our marriage; it came like a shock upon me, as you must remember. Those claims, — that letter, — indeed, indeed I never breathed it to a soul. And you soothed me, and consoled me, and assured me that the love you had for me was not the same kind of feeling as that which you had felt for *her*. But I was new to everything wrong. My mind has not recovered its strength."

"Still the old story," said Mr. Floyer, petulantly.

"And then, Mrs. Neville! Oh Stanhope! can you dare to think of another man's wife? of the mother of children, whose fate in life is in that mother's hands? — Pause, ere you are again led into guilt. Guilt! yes, Stanhope, guilt! None know but you, and I, and God above, the truths I utter. I speak not for myself, — my own sorrows I will bear, — but I speak for those poor children, for that unconscious husband!" She extended her hands towards him in the

earnestness of her address. Then, afraid of vexing or irritating by her uncontrollable tears, she hastened away.

The night of the ball arrived. Scarcely had the moon risen, when the sounds of carriage-wheels along the streets; the plodding, regular steps of the sedan-chairmen; the hum of voices from groups of towns-people collected to see the company get out, and go in; the chattering of womankind, and the general indications of bustle that are multifarious and indescribable, filled the air, in commemoration of this signal event.

Mrs. Stanhope Floyer drove down in her carriage to call for her father and Mrs. Meadows, but alighted on being told that Mr. Meadows was ill. She found him in a paroxysm of the gout—a disease which had much increased upon him since he had been signally taken care of. Mrs. Meadows was under the hands of the hair-dresser. It was somewhat formidable to Adeline to be now alone with her father. She feared his solicitude for her happiness; she eluded his questions; she shrank from the evasion and duplicity which must be necessary to deceive him into the belief that the marriage to which he had at the last so precipitately given his consent, had fulfilled her

wishes. But her father was ill, and she tried to smile and to amuse him.

Before she had encountered the dangers of a *tête-à-tête* the door was flung wide open, and Mrs. Meadows, in full costume, made her appearance. Every object in creation was called into requisition for her adornment; the bird of paradise lent its wing for her head; but, as if that were not enough, there were flowers stuck in here and dotted there, and bows on this side and bows on that, until it was manifest that the intention of the contriver of the garniture was that the head should be made as much of a globe as possible.

“Thank Heavens! I got Mr. Sabin at last! The doctor’s wife had ordered him at six,—he was to be at the rectory at seven, to dress the five Miss Smithsons,—he has been curling and frizzing the officers who are recruiting here, since two. ‘It’s a most arduous life,’ says I, ‘Mr. Sabin?’—‘Yes, ma’am, anything in the fancy line is attended with anxiety.’ I don’t suppose, Mrs. Stanhope, that you and I shall be taken for mother and daughter!”

Adeline expressed her wish to remain until her father went to bed.

“Why, poor dear soul!” said the gay-hearted Louisa, “he likes to see us young

ones merry. Well, sir, I suppose it is not time for the composing-draught yet," looking wistfully at a small bottle on the chimney-piece.

"I will send a servant to Mrs. Lawson," cried Adeline, "she will receive you in the vestibule, and permit me—I see so little of my father—to join you afterwards. Stanhope, or, if he should be engaged, Mr. Tresham will call for me here at ten."

Too eager to be off, Mrs. Meadows, after many cajoling speeches to her husband, whose attractions she had put in the scale against pleasure, descended, but could not help running up again, feathers and all, to whisper to Mr. Meadows, "I only wish the Loftuses saw *how* I am going!—two footmen, lamps and all! right and tight. I shall write to one of the Middletons to-morrow!"

The sound of the carriage-wheels died away on the ear of those whom she left, and the father and daughter sat long together. The time was employed by Adeline in a fruitless endeavour to effect the first steps to a reconciliation between Loftus and his father. People who have still the bad blood of enmity in their veins have always some one point on which to excuse their rancour. "I never can

forgive a man who has said that."—"I would speak to such an one if he had not written this." What erring creatures we are; and yet, what an infinitude of persuasion it takes to induce us poor mortals to forgive one single error in another!

"I could pardon Loftus,—I could receive him to-morrow," was Mr. Meadows' excuse to himself, "if he had not tampered with Cradock and Lewis, one of the best houses (to me) in Wolstone. The very bread he has eaten! the origin of his outset into life! No, he has done what cannot be recalled. I never forgave but once!" said Mr. Meadows, with violence, "and I have repented it (though I have said nothing about it) ever since."

Adeline guessed what he meant, and trembled. She was relieved (and when relations are not quite comfortable together no people are *so* uncomfortable) when the time prescribed for the composing-draught came, and when she was obliged by the lateness of the hour to repair to Lord Mauley's.

There is very little encouragement to persons to be scrupulous about character when matters of pleasure are concerned. People can lay aside their conscience for a night or so: it returns wonderfully when titled sinners

are too old to make balls and dinner-parties thus stifling scrupulous objections to their past career or present principles.

The fair,—the gay,—the honourable in descent,—the reverend in calling, the innocent, the respectable, girls who knew no guile, and mothers who had reared families in every observance that could claim reverence, were collected in the ball-room of Lord Mauley. It was a beautiful sight; the elegance of the London world with the freshness of country habits; and the strictest decorum prevailed; for the rest, it was like other balls, pleasant to the eye and ear, fatiguing to the body, loathsome to the mind. I speak as an elderly votary of pleasure,—dim visions of former delights arise to the memory to tax one with ingratitude; yet the pleasures of the ball, even at sixteen, were distracting—its results, *ennui* and the headache. A thorn lay in every rose that was culled; the favourite partner declined to dance; or the wrong man came to claim you to supper; or a tiresome *belle* engrossed every eye in the room; or an insolent exquisite took upon him to declare that there was not a girl worth looking at; or mamma set out too late,—or papa would go home too early;—or one's hair came out of

curl, or a shoe pinched,—or a glove slit, or—but, without further disquisition, be convinced that whilst there are no pleasures unalloyed, there are none so much alloyed as those which a ball pretends to offer.

The room was in one universal *assemblée* when Mrs. Stanhope Floyer entered. Mr. Tresham, with his melancholy eyes, was the only unemployed beau. Adeline, pale and anxious, did not see either Mrs. Neville, or Mr. Lawson, or her husband. She sat down in a recess, and Mr. Tresham drew near her.

“I am going home to-morrow,” said the unfortunate young man, in a low tone. “My mother is impatient to see me; and I think I shall be better at home.”

“Have you, then, been ill?” enquired Adeline, looking with undisguised compassion on one whom she regarded as little less unhappy than herself. “Oh, return home without delay,—be firm in that.”

“Mr. Lawson wants me to stay over Sir Henry Bateson’s coming of age. It is only till the day after to-morrow,—but I don’t know —”

“Oh, let him not entice you to do so,” cried Adeline, earnestly. “Beware—beware of Mr. Lawson.”

“I *have* reason to beware of him,” said the unhappy young man, whilst his eyes filled with tears. They were sitting in a conspicuous place; and Adeline, eager to rescue the victim from his destroyer, by whom he had been already plundered of every shilling, — eager to save him from the gulph which yawned to receive him, arose, and, leading the way to a verandah, Mr. Tresham followed her.

Adeline was as guileless as the weak youth whom she sought to save; and it never occurred to her that there could be a thought of sin imputed to any action of hers; but she knew not, to the extent, the truth, that contamination is not the only danger into which an association with the bad ensnares us. Earnestly she entreated, she besought Mr. Tresham to yield to the wishes of his parents: she counselled him never to return to the society of Lawson. Her words sank deep into his heart. It was not that in the breast of the youth an idea was harboured that a brother might not have felt. No. Unhappy Tresham! whatever were thy errors, that which was imputed to thee existed not. But the gentle, sister-like sympathy — the sincerity — of Adeline were re-

ceived gratefully by one who had of late encountered crafty wiles, and who trembled in the bonds of Lawson.

Young Tresham thought of home; he remembered the counsels of a kind father; the yearning tenderness expressed in his mother's letters were recalled as Adeline spoke, and his mournful eyes were fixed upon her with mingled pleasure and grief.

"I have not offended you, Mr. Tresham; you are not angry with me?" said Adeline, with a smile.

"I will call and bid you farewell to-morrow," replied Tresham, following her, as if for protection, into a more open space; for he saw Mrs. Neville and her satellites approaching.

Adeline, bowing slightly to Mrs. Neville, hastened to seek her mother-in-law. Bystanders, who knew Mrs. Stanhope Floyer only by reputation,—who had never met her on the hunting-field, nor seen her riveted to the card-table,—nor known of her as the belle of the race-stand, were unanimous in their praises of the sedate demeanour of one whose beauty and style of deportment might well command general admiration. It is obvious, that, as a point of policy, women

would do well to remain contentedly in the back-ground ; for never do they appear so admirable as when they choose the " vantage ground " of modesty.

Mrs. Neville was now in the height of her insolent reign. She laughed and joked with her admirers ; directed a supercilious gaze towards Mrs. Meadows' flushed face and ill-poised plume ; and never for an instant were her eyes lowered, except to draw up her white kid glove over her rounded arm, or to arrange the bouquet placed near her left shoulder. There was something in the cool indifference of her manner, and in her smart repartees, that fascinated the very young, and the rather old—middle-aged men usually shunned Mrs. Neville.

Amid the groups of handsome, high-born men who hung over her chair none were to be compared with Stanhope Floyer. So thought Mrs. Neville ; and if ever her eye lost its bold stare, or her lips their sarcastic smile, it was when blushing, and with every expression softened, she listened to his whispers.

Yes, he whispered, and exchanged glances with the very woman who had wrung the heart of poor Adeline ; whilst she, with a

now habitual melancholy on her face, sat dejected, unconscious of the admiration and sympathy of all, indifferent either to their praise or blame; but trying to bear, without an open display of mortified affection—for it was even come to that—the selfish homage of her husband to one who, as she had told him, “had cost her many pangs.”

All at once, her sufferings became too much for her—the room seemed to turn round—the dancing figures were indistinct—the music was all a jumble of discords. She arose precipitately; no one observed her except Mrs. Lawson, who followed her into an adjoining room. Ere she gained a seat, she caught—not knowing what she did—at the arm of some one retreating. That person, whoever he was, supported her to a chair.

A few moments of suffocating oppression—a feeling as if her heart was bursting—and Adeline was herself again. Mrs. Lawson was kneeling before her holding her hands. The stranger was standing by her when Adeline turned hastily towards him. She saw—one who seldom crossed her path—Eustace Floyer. His manner was grave and kind, and, to her

conscious mind, his asking no questions as to her indisposition, and his abstaining from speaking a word of his cousin, were proofs that he had somewhere observed her unhappiness, and her pangs were doubled in the thought. She rose, and thanking him for his assistance, left him standing, apparently in thought, near the chair on which she had sat. The sounds of music had ceased, and ere they had crossed the ball-room, now deserted, two gentlemen, deputed by Lord Mauley, came to hasten them to supper.

“Come here, come here,” cried Mrs. Meadows’ voice. “I have an inch of room for each of you. Squeeze in. What a banquet! And how devotedly attentive his lordship is. He has been talking of Wolstone. And what do you think? he knows Lady Emma, my last situation but one. I knew her too; but not quite on the same terms as his lordship. But I merely talked in generals — trust me for that; but, most singular, his lordship praised Miss Lindsay’s singing. Thinks I, ‘I know as much about that as you do.’ Do you suppose that Mrs. Neville means to take a pattern of my dress? She has fixed her eyes on me ever since supper.”

“I wish,” said a grave old gentleman on the other side of Mrs. Meadows, “she would take a pattern of you in some other things, ma’am: she’s prodigiously proud.”

“Thank you, sir! And now, in return for that compliment, let me advise you never to cut a pear; it spoils the flavour. Come, Adeline,” she whispered on the other side; “don’t be downcast by that proud woman’s cutting you, as I saw she did. I wouldn’t be walked over—dear me! I think nothing of her now I see her in a room. How close her eyes are together; and how very bad a shape her nose is!”

“Great subjects of consolation!” said the grave, sententious gentleman near Mrs. Meadows. “Do you go to the revels at Broxbourne Hall to-morrow?”

“Oh, dear sir, no. My good man, who is the most devoted of husbands, is extremely particular *where* I go. I don’t happen to be acquainted with my Lady What’s-her-name, at Broxbourne. Our acquaintance all lie in another county, where we have a remarkably select, choice,—indeed, I may say, high society indeed. I never patronize any but the best; and I have a husband who never says me nay.”

“I am sorry you have a husband at all,

madam," returned the stranger, bowing. "It isn't every day one meets with a lady who makes such an impression as yourself."

"Dear me, sir!—Adeline, move a little farther, love. Did you hear?"

"Yes," returned Adeline, "and I should think it better to hear no more. I see the ladies are retiring."

"Well!" said Louisa, as they drove home; "my usual luck! I never used to go anywhere in my single days without a compliment or two. Well, your poor dear father is asleep. As to Lord Mauley, he's been devoted to me; he really was quite absorbed, poor man; and then that charming unknown. Do you suppose him to be a branch of the family? But, dearest, darling Adeline, what has been the matter with *you* all the evening? You never will outshine that Mrs. Neville, if you go on so, dear—dressing so dowdy, and hanging your head down.

'What! if looking well won't please him,
Will looking ill, prevail?'

I would outshine Mrs. Neville."

Her words met with no reply; but like many other light speeches, they sank into the mind of the hearer.

"Other married people," thought Adeline, as

the carriages passed hers in her solitary drive home, "go home *together*. But I have not a soul to talk over the pleasures or pains of the evening—perhaps it is as well. Stanhope is weary of complaint; and to none other ought I to complain."

CHAPTER III.

"Alas! the past I never can regain,
Wishes may rise, and tears may flow in vain."

LANDOR.

IN a few days after the ball, Mr. and Mrs. Meadows departed; Lord Mauley went to London; and the "set" congregated at the house of Sir Henry Bateson, a dissolute, though a very young man, where Lawson, Stanhope Floyer, the Nevilles, and others daily held their social meetings.

People talk of the dissipation and vice of London; they forget the constant injury done by evil example in country places: the upas-like infection which such a nobleman as the "bad Lord Littleton," the most atrocious but accomplished of reprobates, sheds around the residence which he contaminates with his presence. They forget the danger which besets unemployed minds, and the certain destruction to an honest shame which follows that

detection and exposure to which the delinquents of the country are liable; besides the reluctance with which certain offences are visited on the important country gentleman. Subservient tenants, a thriving steward, a clergyman who, in former days,—such was the degradation of our parochial clergy fifty years ago,—would fain have abridged the commandments rather than have offended his patron; neighbours, who had essential reasons for not quarreling with neighbours; a time-serving magistracy; county newspapers that knew only how to praise; and a sporting acquaintance who could never see a blemish in any man who had such good preserves of game, generally used to let a man down, as the saying is, very easily. To destroy a fox is next to felony; to lead a young, responsible being to the very verge of destruction, has ever been a gentlemanly error.

This state of maxims and morals, which, though not universal, was, at least, prevalent in the period to which dates my tale, is rapidly disappearing. Thanks to an especial Providence, we have a zealous, if not an infallible clergy; we have a rightly-thinking aristocracy, —on all points, except where their own interest is concerned; we have a press so puri-

fied that it is now no longer an experiment to be proved, that what is grossly immoral will not be long popular: if we have too many good books; if too much has been done for the poor "women of England," who are besermonized until they prove ungrateful to their teachers, still there is a good spirit in all this; still there is an elevation of character in the constant endeavour to improve. There is abundant reason for the philanthropist to compare and to rejoice.

One great cause of the improvement is the partial abolition of parties into which ladies could not be admitted. Our mothers and grandmothers can remember the time when ladies stayed, night after night, at home to goffer their caps, or to "chronicle small beer," whilst the men dined and drank together, or played cards, or smoked. This was in country towns; and, in country houses, there were gentlemens' dinner-parties, the inventions of Satan for corrupting the mind and debasing the manners.

Night after night Adeline sat solitarily in her drawing-room, the shrill wind whistling round the isolated house; her resources powerless to employ her attention; her accomplishments valueless, her mind preying upon itself; whilst

Stanhope Floyer "kept up the game," as it was called, of deep play and hard drinking at Broxbourn. Night after night she pondered upon the approaching crash of their affairs, with almost a hope that it might drive them for ever from the country. It was true she had her settlement; but to her honourable mind, no forms of law could justly bind her not to employ as much of that as she could take, and yet leave a small competency to prevent her and Stanhope from becoming a burden upon others, in liquidating at least a portion of his just debts. The idea of any tradesman suffering from her husband's extravagance, was exquisitely painful to her. Every luxury of her own she had retrenched, and Stanhope had allowed it without a murmur;—but when she spoke of his dogs, his hunters, his grooms, economy was absurd, and curtailment impossible!

Gradually the ties between her and Stanhope were loosening; day by day the tenderness of her affection was chilled; the susceptibility of her feelings on his account was blasted. She could now hear of his passing evening after evening in the society of Mrs. Neville and her friends with comparative composure. Habit mercifully teaches beasts to bear

the goading of the whip; reason cannot do so much for human beings. I feel convinced that the power of habit,—the effect of time in reconciling us to irremediable sorrows,—is one of the truest instances of benevolent design in the great system of Omniscient parental mercy.

Mr. Stanhope Floyer, like most erring and all selfish men, was now extremely uncertain in his temper. Sometimes he came home gloomy, sometimes irritable; pleasant moods for a wife who has no other companion to bear! The ill-starred union was childless—and Adeline had not the consolation sometimes allotted to the solitary mother, that a joyous, buoyant infant affords. But she had become reconciled to this privation too; and even thankful that there were none to share her miseries, nor to be contaminated—and she shuddered as she thought of it—by such men as Lawson.

This is a melancholy preface to scenes still more gloomy; and I willingly hasten over this part of my story, which may bring pain, perhaps a salutary pain, to the conscience of some, but may uselessly affect the feelings of others.

One day, one wintery day, when Mr. Floyer had left her, uttering some expressions of unwonted fierceness and malignity, Adeline had occasion to drive into Swindon. She had

now given up her carriage-horses, and a low phaeton with one pony which she drove herself, was the only vehicle of which she could avail herself. As she wended, followed by a servant on horseback, down the lane towards Swindon, she mused on certain expressions of her husband's on the preceding evening. Could they proceed from jealousy? and why was the name of Tresham mingled with his taunts? and why had Mr. Tresham, in spite of all his resolutions, lingered near the fatal rallying-point of Lawson and his associates?

She passed over a long, low, wooden bridge, which crossed a narrow stream which gives a picturesque character to the approach to Swindon. The stream was swollen, and the skies were cheerless, and a watery haze was in the atmosphere. The wind was rising, and Adeline, fearful of being late on her return from the town, urged on her steed more swiftly into the streets of Swindon.

It was a market-day: and cheeses and crockery-ware stood in the open space; and lambs were bleating in the folds, and women were returning home in their scarlet cloaks and black bonnets, with baskets lighter and purses heavier than when they had set out to trudge to Swindon from some distant hamlet.

The shop-keepers seemed to have nothing to do, but there was a little stir about the Town Hall, and something moving within the pound; the stocks stood wide-mouthed, the terror of boys and men. But, with these lively exceptions, a mournful air pervaded the whole town. The main street, wide and irregular, with an ancient school-house, and gable-ends of watling work, contained the most respectable shops; at the doors of these stood several groups of people, talking together, but with a solemnity and in such low tones, that Adeline fancied they must have her mournful thoughts.

She drove to the Black Bull, from the civil mistress of which her father and Mrs. Meadows had received much attention, and inquired after some of Mrs. Meadows' multifarious ornaments which had been left there.

Mrs. Harris, the sovereign of the Bull—and she reigned in her own right, the king-consort being dead—invited her into the parlour, her own parlour behind the bar, until the missing ear-drops were found and fetched.

“Is anything the matter in the town to-day?” inquired Adeline, as she drew her cloak around her, and prepared to return.

Mrs. Harris was a considerate, motherly

woman, and she hesitated to answer the question. "It's a very melancholy business, ma'am," she said, at last, feelingly; "perhaps you might know Mr. Tresham?"

"Mr. Tresham—yes—what—what has happened?"

"Poor young gentleman! He lodged over the library opposite; some say one thing, some say another; but last week, it seems, he lost a great sum of money to one of Mr. Lawson's friends. They say he was quite ruined before; there was a quarrel over their wine, last night, and he came home late. There's different stories—but I see our clergyman coming out of the house, he can tell us the rights of it.

Mrs. Harris, as she spoke, ran out; and a short conference took place between her and Mr. Warton, the vicar of Swindon. Adeline knew not then that it was a little trait of delicacy, not seldom to be met with in the inferior classes of society, which induced Mrs. Harris to entrust the rest of the tale into better hands than hers.

Mr. Warton slowly entered. He was a grave, good man, of a subdued and sorrowing spirit, for he had known many afflictions.

"I have just quitted the house," he said, respectfully addressing Adeline; "the Inquest

is sitting, and soon all will be known. You seem surprised! have you not heard of the event? This poor young man, this Mr. Tresham, was found this morning dead! There is little doubt but that his own hand did the deed. He was quite lifeless, there was not a struggle, not a sigh perceptible to those who flew to him on the report of the pistol."

"Oh my God! my God!" exclaimed Adeline, wringing her hands; "his father, his poor mother; why did he stay! why did he linger here?"

Mr. Warton shook his head. "He was in bad company, I fear; but the immediate cause of his death was—" he stopped short, and seemed lost in thought. In a few moments he looked round and closed the door, entreating Mrs. Harris to withdraw. She retired, and the clergyman and Adeline were left alone together. "It is, perhaps, better, madam," said the clergyman, "that I should tell you what, I fear, you will undoubtedly hear from common report. A quarrel took place last night, at the house of Sir Henry Bateson, between the late Mr. Tresham and a gentleman there. Some insult was offered to the unfortunate young man, publicly offered; it is supposed that he had not the spirit to resent it, nor the

firmness to bear it; this, and the state of his circumstances, are supposed to have caused the deed."

"I can believe it," said Adeline,—“I can believe it, for he was a young man of uncontrolled feelings. But, sir, there is something in your manner, even in your words, that points the particulars of this dreadful case as referring to *me*. Is it really so?—or is it that my fancy suggests it—that my harassed mind”—she rose, and turning from the clergyman, walked to and fro in much agitation for some moments 'ere she could finish her speech—“that my anxious mind turns everything into one channel!”

“I am addressing Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, I believe?” asked the clergyman, as a sort of preface to what he was about to say; he did not wait for a reply. “The story current here, is, madam, that upon some false representation touching his wife, Mr. Stanhope Floyer was so unguarded as publicly to insult this poor misguided young man; he struck him with his cane, but Tresham was held down, and prevented from retaliating. I am sorry to distress you,” said Mr. Warton suddenly stopping short.

“Tell me, if you please, all!” exclaimed

Adeline, whilst every tinge of colour left her face. "It is important to me," she added, smothering her feelings, "to know the whole truth."

"—The young man was a coward, a madman, to destroy himself for the insult of a drunken brawl!" pursued Mr. Warton. "No, madam, be assured, there were other reasons: a reckless, wretched course,—friends impoverished,—his honour tainted. Believe that you are guiltless of having accelerated his destruction."

"I," cried Adeline! "Oh, God! is his blood on my head?"

"Madam, there were reports. Those who know Mrs. Stanhope Floyer by name, and to me her virtues are known, must scorn the rumours; but your name was coupled with his, and Mr. Stanhope Floyer's rage was said to have been raised by jealousy."

"Jealousy!" repeated Adeline with bitter contempt. "Jealousy, from him! Sir, I beg you to pardon and pity me if I am frantic at this story. I entreat you to counsel me, for I am very desolate,—very inexperienced,—very unhappy. There are some sorrows which I cannot disclose to any one. What would you advise me?"

“In order to silence these calumnious reports?” inquired the clergyman.

“For myself, they are of little import,” replied Adeline, in a tone of deep despondency; “but I have a father; yes, I *have* a father!” she exclaimed, clapping her hands as if in fervent gratitude. “But he is ill and old. Such reports would kill him. Yes, sir, they would kill him! Oh, tell me how I may hide from him even that his child, his only daughter, has been traduced. But I am wrong, to think only of myself, and to forget the sorrowing friends of him whose death I may have hastened!”

She spoke with sad solemnity; and Mr. Warton did not interrupt the course of her

Surely, when he returns, he may advise, assist."

"My sorrow does not admit of human consolation," replied Adeline, looking upwards; and for a few moments her hands and eyes were raised in prayer. "My God! teach me to bear this!" fell in solemn accents from her lips.

Mr. Warton looked with surprise and sorrow upon the afflicted and beautiful being; whom, if rumour were correct, a profligate husband neglected, and with whose good name many, at that very moment, in the town of Swindon, were making free. Even he, staggered by the character of Stanhope Floyer's associates, had judged her to be erring and thoughtless, if not guilty of what her husband's frantic jealousy pointed to: but the good man looked on that fair and innocent face, and the friendless Adeline was acquitted.

He was aroused from his reverie by her bidding him good-night. The hurried manner in which she hastened from him convinced Mr. Warton that all further interrogatories would be deemed impertinent. He handed Mrs. Floyer in silence to her carriage, and then, following her with his eyes

as long as he could, went to the bookseller's opposite to enquire the result of the inquest.

The shop was closed, and the windows were barred to keep out inquisitive intruders, and the clergyman was forced to go in by the private door. The coroner and jury had just come down stairs after seeing the body of the deceased; they were hastening to the inn, where witnesses were to be examined; and the good clergyman, after giving charge to the people of the house to conduct the friends of the deceased, when they arrived, to his own house, returned home.

Meantime Adeline proceeded rapidly to

she was still devoted; but there are bonds which the most injured, the most despised, of women, cannot break. Love was stronger — oh, how much stronger! than her resentment.

She reached her silent home, — she flung open the wicket of her garden; — she ran into the house: — it was empty! and the shades of twilight were stealing over its quiet apartments. Mr. Stanhope Floyer had not been at home all day; — there had been no message from him, — no letter, — no one had called! Whilst so much had happened elsewhere, the peace of that region had been undisturbed; the monotonous employments of its menial inmates had gone on as usual.

Adeline leaned her throbbing head on her hand, and, planting herself before the window, watched as long as a glimmer of light remained a small portion of the road which she could see between the trees. Every breeze which fluttered over the poplars, every stir among the bushy evergreens which skirted the lawn, how it shook her with agitation! She sat until all around her was in darkness, until not a spray of roses which twined about the window-frames from without, was discernible. No one appeared — night drew on. She had a

strong conviction that there was still something good and kind in Stanhope's heart, and that, knowing how much the news of Tresham's fate would distress her, he was sure at last to come—but yet he came not. The hour of rest arrived—rest! how she sickened at the very word; how she loathed the sight of the sleepless pillow on which night after night she had lain without the blessing of repose; in all the tumult of thought, of thought quickened by the excitement which comes on when nature is set at defiance, and when memory and anxiety usurp the hours which are destined to oblivion.

But she was recommended to lie down, and, without taking off her clothes, without strength of mind to say her prayers, with an obstinate conviction that she could not rest, she laid herself sorrowfully on her pillow, starting at every footstep, straining her ear to catch the fancied movement of the outer gate, rising ever and anon at the imagined sounds of horses' feet,—and then sinking back in all the mental prostration of unutterable despair. The night was long; the wind was rough, and its wailing could, at any time, have prevented the delicately-nurtured Adeline from sleeping; but now,—when her nerves had received a shock,

when a deed of horror had just been disclosed to one new to the events of life,—the howling blasts were, to her fevered imagination, like the shrieks of the doomed.

But, at length, she slept—the cold imperfect slumber of exhaustion, in which the frame seems to rest, but not the mind, came over her. Often she started, and fancied that in the gloom of the chamber, by the dim light of the night-lamp, a figure moved along; the word "*Stanhope*" fell from her lips; then, disappointed, hopeless, she sank back to listen again and again.

Morning found her planted at the window, looking about on the wintery scene, and seeking some consolation from its devastation. Large boughs of trees had been broken off by the night-blast, and strewed the lawn—perhaps Stanhope had been persuaded, on the score of bad weather and of impassable roads, to remain at Broxbourne—he was so easily persuaded! Anything but that he really thought her guilty, even of imprudence; anything but that he meant to leave her! And she remembered her resolution of separation as a wild impulse which it were impossible to execute. Then her thoughts went back to Tresham, to the plundered, betrayed, insulted

boy—and the flush of indignation, even towards her husband, tinged her cold brow and caused her heart to throb with poignant grief.

Morning passed away—noon came; towards afternoon, a restless, agonized desire of change of scene possessed poor Adeline. She felt that she could not, dared not, remain in that lone house another evening, still less, another night. She could no longer endure the agony of suspense; she resolved, she knew not why, to go to Swindon to see Mr. Warton, to ask his advice—at any rate to seek the solace of his sympathy. She felt that it was essential to her to *speak* to some one; not to rely on her thoughts for aid; her full heart must be disburthened. She had no sooner decided to go, than she was impatient to hasten away. She would not even wait until the carriage was prepared; but set out to walk.

The fresh westerly wind refreshed her heated brow, and gave strength to her languid frame. She paced quickly along the winding lane, sickening with expectation at every turn, when she fancied she might see her husband; but not a soul, save a few rustics coming from the fields to their way-side cottages, broke the drear solitude. Swindon came into view, its grey steeple, and its long bridge, and a

little movement in its streets seemed to cheer and stimulate the lonely being who approached the haunts of other human beings. Even to the spot where Tresham lay extinct, her thoughts were calmly directed, for, as she reviewed her conduct, her conscience was clear towards the unhappy and guilty young man. Her carriage overtook her as she entered the town, and she drove to the vicarage.

Mr. Warton was gone to the church, and Adeline, without inquiring why, drove thither also. But, as she reached the gate of the church-yard, she saw that the church was closed. A little group of boys were dispersing from around a grave, newly-filled up; and an aged woman was passing from one corner of the church-yard to another. Adeline alighted from her carriage, and entered the precincts of the place of rest. It was extended to the very edge of that small and placid stream which flowed by Swindon, and a few alders quivered on the bank. It was an ancient enclosure, well-tenanted by rich and poor, and dignified by the grave and gothic character of its church.

Adeline stopped the old woman 'ere her hand was on the latch of the gate. "Where,— can you tell me where is Mr. Warton?"

“I do not know,” was the calm reply; “he has been gone away half an hour from the church-yard. He was *there*”—pointing to a mound of fresh earth between the alders—“the grave of the young man that shot himself on Tuesday. The parson will not come back here to-night, I dare say, added the woman”—she dropped a curtesy, and walked on.

“Nay,” cried Adeline, wildly, grasping the red cloak of the aged woman—“was it—was it Mr. Tresham whom they buried last?”

“Be you his sister?” asked the old woman, looking into her face; “I thought you was expected; so I heard. *That’s* his grave,” she added, pointing to the alders, and walked on.

Adeline crossed the grassy mounds beneath which lay, perhaps, beings as lamented as the ill-fated Tresham, and stood in a few minutes near his resting-place. There is a solemn appeal to the heart from a newly-made grave! The last tenant of the church-yard has but just ceased to feel those sympathies and interests which quicken the pulse of the living—interests of which, perhaps, we have been speaking, yet awhile, ere we looked upon the mound of fresh earth,—and were silenced. Alone,—the wind rustling in the trees above; the gloomy windows of the chancel on the one side, the

flowing waters of the stream on the other ; between them Tresham's grave,—Adeline stood spell-bound. She had one comfort, tears ;—on the desolate spot where the remains of the suicide were buried, she wept. Her wrongs, her miseries, were forgotten —she wept for Tresham.

Presently, ere she could muster resolution to depart, footsteps and muttered sounds fell upon her ear. Some passengers, she thought ; but no, a young man and a lady were coming towards her. The young man supported the lady, seemingly his sister ; he was calm until he reached the grave ; but there, falling on the mound, he gave way to a passion of anguish which shook his frame. His sister knelt down by his side. Neither of the mourners saw Adeline, for she had hastily retired at their approach. But she saw them. She saw, and guessed the bitterness of their grief. She looked no more ; in agony she fled from the churchyard, and too—far too agitated to face her servants, she turned into a narrow lane which led to the river.

It was a cheerful spot down by the water-side : a mill-dam broke up the waters into white and glistening spray ; and the miller's

house, substantial, neat, and standing in a fair garden, was close to the mill; and kine were standing in a small farm-yard, and flocks of pigeons were on the roof of the house, and there was a light in the parlour-window of the good folks, for it was growing late, and a cheerful party were gathered around the fire, at tea. But Adeline, shrinking from that communion with others which she had lately coveted, moved on until she came to another wooden bridge, which, by a hand-rail, enabled the passenger to cross to the opposite meadow.

A gentleman was coming towards her from that meadow, and Adeline hastily turned back. 'Twas of no use; she was recognized and pursued, and the voice of Eustace Floyer, the first tones of kindness that came to soothe her, recalled her to remembrance.

She turned towards him, but she could not speak. Her wild expression of countenance, her paleness, her evident despair, excited the utmost sympathy of one who felt for her what words could not tell. He drew her arm within his; he supported her as she walked, for she was now tremulous and overcome. The stimulus of grief was gone, she had now only its depression.

They spoke not, until they reached the church-yard gate. Eustace laid his hand on the wicket.

“No; not there, not there,” cried Adeline, shrinking back. “I have no right to mourn with *them*.”

Eustace hesitated for a moment; then he seemed to comprehend what she meant; the receding figures of the brother and sister caught his eye, he proceeded not until they were out of sight. The next object they encountered was Adeline’s carriage. Then Adeline turned towards her companion.

“I cannot go back. I cannot spend another night—O Mr. Floyer! if you knew what horrors—what misery I have endured!”

“But my cousin— but Stanhope?” said Eustace. “Is not he with you? does he leave you?”

“I know not,” replied Adeline, sighing deeply. “Walk with me,” she added, “a little way; I shall perhaps, then, be able to go home.”

Her plaintive voice struck to the heart of the kind young man. It seemed almost an interposition of Providence that he should have met the poor lonely one, and have saved her from despair; yet there were few

whom Adeline would, at that moment, more gladly have shunned.

Since her marriage, a coolness had existed between Eustace Floyer and his cousin. They were not men of the same material; neither did they move in the same society. What Mr. Stanhope Floyer frequented, we have seen; but Eustace Floyer's aim took altogether a different direction. He had studied for the bar, more particularly to qualify him for the senate; and manly, intellectual pursuits preserved him from the degradation of vice. Already, whilst in life's dawn, talents, which afterwards became eminently distinguished, had attracted public attention; whilst a blameless and, one might hope, a happy life, had ensured him respect.

He had resolutely shunned the society of his cousin for reasons which did honour to his principles; and, if his peace of mind had not been wholly secured, if an early and misplaced attachment had not been wholly forgotten, it was most certainly subdued. Regret, sympathy, tender respect, these were the sentiments which Eustace Floyer cherished towards Adeline; he dared not, however, trust himself to intimacy.

“And where, then, do you wish to go?”

he asked, as still walking, they pursued their way through the town. "Would my mother?" he spoke timidly. "You do not reply! At all events," he added, earnestly, "stay not *here*."

At this moment a servant came up to them with a letter: "I knew you would be glad to receive it, madam," said the man, "as you were asking for it; 'tis from master."

"From Stanhope!" cried Adeline, tearing open the paper. In an instant it fell from her hands. "Take me somewhere," she said, faintly; "anywhere,—for I shall drop!"

Mr. Floyer, alarmed beyond measure, crossed over the street, supporting her; he rang a gate-bell, and in a few moments Adeline was in the parlour of the vicarage.

She scarcely knew where she was; but sat with a vacant stare upon her once speaking countenance; and it was in vain that Eustace strove to engage her attention. He rang the bell, and a female servant brought restoratives; and presently Adeline thanked him, and turned upon him a look of unutterable distress.

"My dear Adeline! my dear friend!" cried Eustacé, sitting down by her, much overcome.

"Do not call me so,—do not degrade yourself

to do so! Stanhope, Stanhope! he thinks me a lost, abandoned creature! He has left me!"

Eustace could not repress his indignation. "He shall account for this!" he cried, fiercely.

"Oh, harm him not!" cried Adeline, wildly. "Blame him not; I can bear *all!* I have borne much. Perhaps I have not borne it patiently enough — perhaps I have driven him away by my tears — perhaps, Mr. Floyer, I have loved him *too* well. It was to me a first affection," she added, melting into tears — "with him, a marriage of interest; he told me so, — and now, now I believe it. Will you take me to Lady Theodora? — will you let me enter your mother's house? They have traduced me; but I am heart-broken, and cannot feel it as I ought."

"Indeed, indeed I will take you without delay, — to-night, — now!" cried Eustace, "and we will cherish, — honour, — soothe you."

Mr. Warton at this moment entered. It had been his office to relate the details of an awful death to the brother of Tresham: it had been his fruitless endeavour, not to palliate the deed, but to argue that the erring soul might have lost its poise, and its dread responsibility. The funeral rite, the solemn prayer, from which the comfortable words "in sure

and certain hope of a joyful resurrection" are, over the suicide's grave, omitted, were kindly hastened, that one pang at least might be spared to the survivors. And now the pastor came to comfort another sufferer. That night she slept at the vicarage, and on the morning she departed from Swindon.

CHAPTER IV.

“ But in the human breast
A thousand still small voices I awake,
Strong in their sweetness from the soul to shake
The mantle of its rest.

“ I bring them from the past,
From true heart's broken, gentle spirits torn,
From crush'd affections, which, though long o'erborne
Make their tone heard at last.”

was temporarily situated in the neighbourhood of London, and had returned to his own abode in the metropolis. During his short sojourn under the same roof with Adeline, he had become better informed on the subject of her feelings than his mother. It had been his office, as he conducted her from Swindon, to "bind up the wounds" of the broken-hearted wife,—to glean from the involuntary confession (a confession wrung from Adeline in moments of agony) details which afforded to the interested listener an insight into the real state of affairs. Gradually, very gradually, and never wholly, Eustace had become her confidant, her counsellor,—a dangerous position for a man of careless morals, who has once fondly loved the woman who confides. But Eustace was in no danger. To his honourable mind the defenceless situation of the injured wife formed her protection: but had it been otherwise, — had Eustace been tainted by the infection of that or of this age, when the marriage-tie does not seem to preclude the affections from wandering, the purity and simplicity of Adeline's character, and her unrequited and unabated affection for her husband, would have formed a shield of safety for the beautiful and the true: the best shield, believe it, is a woman's own principles.

Time passed away, and there seemed, in Lady Theodora's eyes, no prospect of conjugal happiness again for Adeline. Stanhope Floyer was travelling somewhere; the establishment near Swindon had been hastily broken up; for a week or two he had occupied Woodcote; then he had quitted it; for, ordinarily, his rallying-point was some great watering-place, or London, where Lawson and his other favourite associates could join him.

One morning, after many successive days of *inertia* and despondency, Adeline felt her spirits revive. It was the season of hope: spring had clad the furze-bushes with their golden blossoms, and had brought out the young shoots of the hawthorn. The view from Lady Theodora's parlour extended over the northern declivity of Hampstead Heath. The blue boundary of that rich foreground, then unspoiled by building, marked out the distant country beyond Hendon and Edgware; whilst about, around, a fair garden, rescued from the rude common land, recalled to Adeline the parterres of the Grove and of Woodcote. The recollection cheered her; and, for the first time for many weeks, she drew her husband's portrait from a miniature-case, and gazed upon it fondly, yes, fondly! for she was not one of

those who *could* hate — she was not one of those who could not pardon. A modern writer, of evangelical piety and wisdom, has directed us to proportion the expression of our disapprobation of vice to the good which such a manifestation is likely to achieve. He has explained to us that, in this world of mixed principles, we are not to withdraw from the sinning whilst we can reclaim them.* Adeline, without the aid of others, had resolved upon that line which her duty pointed out. She struck a few chords of the harpsichord which stood in the room, but the air that occurred to her remembrance brought tears. She seated herself on a low stool near the open window, and looked wistfully at the distant country.

A ring at the door-bell aroused her; and after a short interval Mr. Eustace Floyer entered.

“Do not be alarmed,” he exclaimed, seeing that Adeline sprang up hastily, “there is nothing the matter. Stanhope is well,” he added, in a low tone.

“Oh! I am thankful, and I will be calm in future, and not distress you, dear Mr. Floyer, as I do,—often do. But the threats of poor Mr. Tresham’s brother,—those threats in the letter which you saw — are never from

* Dr. Shuttleworth.

my thoughts. But I am relieved. I dare not ask — and yet — have you heard from Stanhope?"

"I have," replied Eustace.—"If you are willing, Adeline, to forget and forgive, — if you are not unrelenting, — if you do not insist upon apologies and explanations, which, in my opinion, merely revive the pains of past days,—Will you see him? — will you meet him?"

"Does he wish to see me? Has he expressed a wish for our re-union?" asked Adeline, her lips quivering as she uttered the words.

"He *must* wish it. But much depends upon yourself. Some women might argue that an insult once offered to a wife should never be forgiven: I believe you to be too generous, too good, to—"

"Oh!" cried Adeline, "speak the word at once — I am too *fond*! Where may I ever hope again to see him?"

"I have seen him lately," said Eustace, mournfully; "but" he added, more cheerfully, "will you meet him at Coughton? He will go there, if you will—that is debateable ground; and you can remove from Coughton, when you are weary of that place, to Woodcote."

"I shall soon be weary, then," replied Ade-

line. "Oh! Mr. Floyer! I see how it is, you have influenced, you have persuaded, Stanhope to this."

"If I have," returned Eustace, hesitatingly, "it is to save him from destruction; and to restore you, if possible, to happiness," he added, with some emotion;—"at all events, you are fulfilling your duty."

"I scarcely deserve that praise," said Adeline; "others, of stronger mind than I possess, may require the aid of duty; but I—" she paused, and looking down, the tears fell from her eyes.

"Poor, *poor* Adeline!" exclaimed Eustace, involuntarily.

Adeline started. "Do you know more than you have told me? Have Stanhope's errors had a deeper tinge of—of vice, for so I must call it, than when we parted?"

"I was thinking, my dear Mrs. Floyer," said Eustace, colouring, — for to his ingenuous nature evasion was repulsive; — "of his affairs. Such company as Stanhope has lately kept has impoverished him greatly; I fear completely. It was not necessary to tell you what you could not obviate; but a second time Stanhope's creditors have seized his available property; the horses, and all other

luxuries, even necessaries, have been sold. It is right to tell you that his affairs are in a desperate condition."

"Is that all? but yet, I ought not to speak so lightly of ruin; of faith betrayed, of character lost, the poor tradesman and artificer injured! My God! that I should even think slightly of such things." Adeline reflected for a few moments; "I cannot call upon my father again to supply me with a maintenance; otherwise, gladly should just debtors take my settlement. At all events, we can live upon that, and pay all that we can yearly, to those who will trust the spendthrifts. *We*,—oh! Mr. Floyer, sweet is that word to one who yearns for a home,—who pines for affection!"

"I cannot think," she resumed, after a pause, "how the separated wife can ever be happy; no, not even if she loves not the husband to whom fate has joined her. Dignity, security, respect, attend the married woman; but a heavy cloud hangs over the path of the separated! *She* has no cares, no occupations; *she* has cast off her rightful ties, and the world cannot sympathize in her injuries; she sees the happy wife with feelings that no sufferings of the married state, no—not even the bitterest reproach of passion can inflict! You may

believe me, Mr. Floyer, for I have felt all that I describe."

"When, then, shall we go to Coughton?" asked Eustace, forcing a smile.

"Soon—soon—yet do not deceive me; do not take me back to Stanhope if *he* wishes it not," said Adeline, trembling as she spoke.

"Adeline," replied Eustace, firmly; "Stanhope loves you fondly—yes! though he has acted unpardonably, I believe it. Confide in him; believe me, if anything will ensure affection, and bring back virtue, it is a generous confidence on woman's part. You will, I earnestly trust, be happy; if not,—if characters so different, or circumstances do not combine to procure you peace,—hesitate not to incur even the world's censure, rather than pine in hopeless, and I know that it would be uncomplaining, misery—come here!"

He turned away, and some powerful feeling rendered these last words indistinct. But his true friendship, his tenderness for her hapless condition; his delicacy to her scruples, and to her very weaknesses; sank deep into the grateful heart of Adeline. But soon every throb of that heart, every thought, every dream almost had reference to that reunion which was her dearest wish.

"I bear the absence of Stanhope worse than ever," she said, in the evening, to Lady Theodora; "since I have hopes of seeing him so soon. Every moment seems an age; and a sort of panic seizes me at times, lest we should not meet—lest some event should prolong our separation. Is Mr. Floyer gone back to London?"

"Yes, he is gone—in very low spirits," said Lady Theodora, gravely.

"And yet he ought to be happy! he who does so much good. I wish he were married!"

"I do not, I am sure," returned Lady Theodora, abruptly; "unless his affections *really* went along with his hand." She sighed, and added, about ten minutes afterwards, "I am not fond of talking about poor Eustace's marrying; he has had his troubles, as well as other people, and he has never thought of *himself* in any action of his life."

Adeline felt surprised at the earnestness of this remark; but she was wholly unconscious of all that passed in Lady Theodora's mind, and, indeed, she had little time to dwell upon the concerns of others. Late that evening, a ring at the gate startled the domestics, who were bringing bed-candles to the drawing-room. Lady Theodora looked at Adeline; a tremor seized the latter; she

fancied it was Stanhope; she arose from her chair, but her footsteps were spell-bound; a voice was heard in the passage—it was not the voice of Stanhope. Why had she expected him? Sick and disappointed she sank into a chair.

“Have I alarmed you? Are you not well?” said the kind, but melancholy tones of Eustace. “Do not be frightened. I returned because, on reaching London, I found that a messenger had arrived from Lady Wentworth to hasten your journey to Coughton. Sir Horace will attain his twenty-first year in about a week; and Lady Wentworth wishes you and my mother and Stanhope to join the festivities.”

“And you? will you not go?” asked Adeline, “we shall not be happy without you.”

“I am not able—and—do not ask me,” said Eustace. “Can you go to-morrow? I have written to Stanhope to meet you at Derby. Are you prepared?” and then, without waiting for an answer, he rose, and said, “Good-night, I am detaining you both from repose. Good-night.”

“But—Mr. Floyer,” cried Adeline, pursuing him; “you are cold to me, unhappy, or angry? or, perhaps—perhaps, it is only fatigue.

If anything has vexed you, let me, whom you have soothed so often, try to console you. He is gone!" she added, turning to Lady Theodora, "what can be the matter with him? What can have vexed Eustace?"

"I know not," replied Lady Theodora, who burned to disclose all; "let us go to rest, for, remember, we have a journey before us to-morrow."

It was late, even on the second day of their journey to Coughton Hall, when Lady Theodora and Adeline drove into Derby. The chimes of All Saints' were commingling with those of the saints of strange names to whom the ancient churches of that fine old town are dedicated, to announce the sixth hour of the evening. The postilions were dashing through the streets, when, ere they turned into the old-fashioned yard of the King's Head Inn, a face pictured in Adeline's heart caught her view. The carriage stopped—she sprang out of it, and was led by her husband into a room. Neither for a time spoke; but Adeline clung fondly to the man who had suffered her name to be coupled with degradation—who had left her to the bitterness of her own thoughts. Such is woman!

To do Stanhope Floyer justice, he appeared touched by the unrepublishing demeanour of his wife. He seemed abashed—a little abashed — by the awkwardness and novelty of the scene. He talked it off, however, as if he and Adeline had only been a journey; as if their separation had not been the result of something worse than folly on his part, and of wounded feelings on hers. In half an hour conversation went on as easily as if the parties who engaged in it had parted only yesterday. Lady Theodora was dull and absent; but her occasional bursts of zeal when any favourite subject was broached, gave discourse an impetus, and set the straw which keeps up good humour in society afloat, down the stream. Stanhope Floyer was eminently successful in difficulties of all sorts, whether they related to the escape from a bailiff, or to the avoidance of an awkward pause in conversation. His spirits were excitable; and he had that ready, happy, art of saying much and of talking well upon a very small stock of mental cultivation. The fascination of his manner was peculiar to himself, and it could be called forth at pleasure.

In his moments of irritation he could be the coarsest, the most selfish, and insufferable

of men. When the good spirit hovered over him he arose again into the polished, animated, and accomplished gentleman. There was no freedom of discourse, no levity of sentiment, in the company which he desired to please, that disclosed from beneath that gay and courteous deportment, the libertine or the gambler,—no indifference to sacred subjects that might betray the sceptic.

Adeline fixed her fond gaze upon him, and felt ashamed of her enthusiasm — the enthusiasm of a simple and trusting heart in its first affection. She thought she perceived a material amendment in his sentiments, manners, and converse. She saw, and with satisfaction rather than regret, that he had now his serious moments. Suddenly, the bright countenance of the handsome and intelligent Stanhope would change — it was overcast with thought. Often he seemed for an instant abstracted, and his wife fondly trusted that the thought might be self-examination, — the abstraction wholesome retrospection.

“We must hasten onwards, Lady Theodora,” said Stanhope Floyer, as the carriage was preparing; “for Lady Wentworth is in the agonies of preparation for the grand

event. Bless me! what are the anxieties of motherhood? To-day, the precious youth wetted his feet in fishing; yesterday, he walked out in the sun; to-morrow, he may chance to stand in the rain. He must have a charmed life to survive so much care. *A-propos.* The heir of Coughton *must* marry. So thinks Lady Wentworth, or the estate will go to a Lawson; and there's now as much haste to make him rush down the precipice of love, as formerly there was to prevent the dear, innocent, boy from knowing that there was such a danger for young men and maidens."

"Mr. Lawson must be rather unwilling to let him precipitate himself," said Lady Theodora; "and, pray, has your friend Lawson as much influence over Lady Wentworth as ever?"

"He *has* an influence, certainly," returned Stanhope, and his countenance changed to an expression of thought. "I wish he could influence my lady to pay his debts; but I find influence vanishes swiftly when one talks of money. But, come, Adeline," he added, with somewhat of his former impetuosity of manner.

It was ten o'clock when the travellers

reached Coughton, and by that time the household was generally, when there was no company, in a state of repose. The prayer-bell was rung at half-past nine. "Good-nights!" succeeded prayers; and at ten o'clock the ladies, at any rate, might be seen ascending stairs to their domiciles.

But a strange confusion and dismay prevailed in Coughton House that night, and many ominous occurrences betokened unwonted events to be forthcoming. Sir Horace, although reproved by his mother the day before, although gruelised and sent to bed at nine the previous night, with bran put into his hot foot-bath, and brown sugar into the warming-pan, — although James's powders had been duly weighed out for him, and a treacle-posset administered in the morning, — although it was a hot day in June, and, although there was a fat, stupid, wealthy, and suitable young lady in the house, descended from a race of ancestors which only missed one generation of being as long as that of the Wentworths, and with whom Lady Wentworth had determined he was to fall in love — this perverse boy — resolved to have his own way, though he was not yet one and-twenty by a week, — had gone out fishing

again, that day. It was most sultry weather; yet, at five o'clock, whilst his mother and Mrs. Lawson had been walking in the garden, Sir Horace, taking with him five of the men-servants, had gone down to the river and remained there, intent upon the amusement, and regardless of the dews of evening.

Poor youth; fishing was the only recreation which parental anxiety had left him to enjoy; dancing was too heating, shooting was too fatiguing, hunting was too dangerous. But fishing has been the privileged diversion of good little boys who have destructive propensities since mammas began; and the tame, safe, puerile, amusement had become as much of a passion as anything could with Sir Horace Wentworth.

But whether it was the gruel, or the warm foot-bath, or the James's powders, or the posset, or *all*, or the long process of maternal care — deadly often in its physical effects — that had rendered the youth pervious to every slight danger, as he walked home in his green fishing-dress, followed by a retinue of officious servants, the precious son had felt a shiver. Immediately, the intelligence flew all over the house. Mr. Lawson, as usual, was first consulted. He shook his head, and

remarked, that he had in vain warned Sir Horace of the risk; though, on subsequent enquiry, it appeared that Mr. Lawson had not been with Sir Horace at the river; and a prophetic remark of Mr. Lawson's, which had often been expressed to different members of Lady Wentworth's family, ran through the household, — that the state of health of Sir Horace was so bad “his life was not worth one year's purchase.”

Just as Lady Theodora and Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope Floyer arrived, the family surgeon drove up to the hall-door. The ladies went to their room, and Stanhope disappeared. Afterwards, it was found that he had been assisting Mr. Lawson in some of his chemical experiments in Mr. Lawson's laboratory, at the west end of the gallery.

Lady Wentworth was able to receive and entertain her friends at supper, and to introduce them to Lady Ellen Finch, a distant connexion of the Wentworth family, and one of those untarnished beings who have not a drop of vulgar blood in their veins. Intellect had not prospered in the same ratio as the physical powers in this favoured fair one, the chosen of Lady Wentworth for her son. Lady Ellen, the result of many intermarriages, was shy,

idealess, odd. She was just turned out from the school-room upon a stock of wits fed upon Guthrie's grammar and Dilworth's spelling-book. She was now advanced to Mrs. Chappone, a well-bound copy of whose immortal letters she held in her hand half the day, confessing that she was always obliged to begin it over again as she never could remember where she had left off. Silly, she flew to "Roderick Random" and "Peregrine Pickle;" — but "The Whole duty of Man," and "Fordyce's Sermons for young Women," formed her ostensible reading.

It mattered little. The soil was not prepared, and no plants of delicate culture could grow in it; vulgar nasturtiums and flaring marygolds might do very well in the unmanageable and impenetrable mould of Lady Ellen's mind; and she was quite good enough for the doom intended for her:—added to which she enjoyed all the influence of being a Lady Ellen, so that other people's faculties were brightened up by her name. Mr. Lawson discerned great quickness underneath the modesty of youth. Lady Wentworth's maid found out she had a charming head of hair. Lady Wentworth called her odd, abrupt, manner "original," and her queer sallies,—the evi-

dences, as Mr. Lawson secretly thought, of a family predisposition to imbecility — “wit.” All that partiality and expectation could do for Lady Ellen had been done.

Her aunt, a purblind, deaf, old lady, some degrees more stupid than Lady Ellen, was wondering all supper-time how Sir Horace could possibly get his cold; whether it was going to church or coming out of church, — for Mr. Lawson, who was so good, had persuaded Sir Horace to go to church twice; or whether it was going up these stairs, or down those; and Lady Wentworth in vain shouted in her ears, that “it was the fishing.” “The fishing! — how could fishing ever give anyone cold?” She never knew anyone take cold in fishing. She didn’t suppose it could be the fishing. Upon which Mr. Lawson took pains to inform her that fishing, when the blood was in a bad state, was most unwholesome and dangerous, and that in his opinion Sir Horace was in a very delicate state of health. “Not that I mean to shock the hopes of anyone deeply interested,” added Mr. Lawson, looking at Lady Ellen, “for, by the blessing of God, he may recover.”

The blessing of God! Adeline thought she did not hear aright. What! serious reflections had begun to possess the gay, deceptive, Law-

son! could they be genuine? She hoped so —yet she recoiled from him nevertheless.

“Mr. Lawson is such a good young man,” whispered Lady Wentworth to the purblind lady:—“he has been such a friend to my Horace,—saved him from so many difficulties,—and Horace has such a spirit!”

“A dangerous thing a high sperrit for a young man!” observed the purblind aunt; “a very dangerous thing—a very dangerous thing. You should guard against that—you should guard against that, Lady Wentworth.”

“Why, Mr. Lawson takes care of him. I always feel happy and secure when Mr. Lawson is with my boy,” said Lady Wentworth. “*Apropos!* you did not finish the story about my son’s quarrel with Chartres and Sillerton; he was wild to fight them both,—was he not?” and the proud mother glanced her eye around the table to see if all were attentive to hear this trait of courage in her cade-lamb of a son.

“Yes; but Sillerton begged pardon, so Horace forgave Sillerton, upon his humble—his very humble apology;—and then Chartres interposed in the matter, whereupon the baronet was for fighting Chartres,—swords were drawn, when fortunately I arrived.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed the purblind lady, “it makes one’s blood run cold!”

“And how weak he looks! how weak he looks!” exclaimed Lady Ellen, abruptly. “One wouldn’t think he could fight any more than I could.”

This was laughed at as astonishingly clever by the chaplain and Lady Wentworth; whilst Lady Wentworth looked round at her friends, observing, “that though Horace looked delicate he had infinite muscular strength. Has he not, Mr. Lawson? But, indeed, you never think well of his constitution.”

Mr. Lawson sighed, checked a coming reply, looked down, hemmed, and muttered, “Let us not anticipate coming evils, Lady Wentworth.”

“I am so thankful, Mr. Lawson,” pursued the fond mother, “that Horace takes so to the book you gave him, ‘The Family Physician;’ he delights in it, dear boy! Every one ought to have it,—Lady Theodora, have you ‘The Family Physician?’ Have you, Mrs. Stanhope Floyer? Have you,—and have you—”

“It is a valuable work, indeed, my lady,” said the chaplain.

“The best family physician,” said Lady Theodora, who could never agree with anyone

long, and therefore consoled her conscience by this and similar speeches,—“is contentment and equanimity.”

“—And spiritual improvement,” added Mr. Lawson.

“It is as good as a chaplain to have you in the house, now,” cried Lady Wentworth, “and I think you’re making Millicent as reasonable as yourself,—are you not, Millicent?”

But Millicent had crept off to her brother. *She* acted,—Mr. Lawson talked.

CHAPTER V.

“It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
And that craves wary walking.”

JULIUS CÆSAR.

IT was now truly gratifying to Adeline to see the change in Stanhope Floyer and in Mr. Lawson, which seasonable adversity, as she believed, had brought about. No inexplicable

He was now regular at morning-prayers ; and, when the chaplain was ill, acted as chaplain. He took the bottom of the table, and said grace with much emphasis. His solicitude for Sir Horace, his brother-in-law, was extreme, and he passed hours in the sick youth's chamber, playing at cribbage, or dominos, or indulging the young baronet's remarkable turn for cutting out trees, animals, or birds with tiny scissors on delicate paper. The rest of his day Mr. Lawson usually passed in his laboratory, in the most secluded part of the house ; there he had an alembic, and there he distilled rose-water, lavender-water, orange-flower-water, elder-water, and all the family essences then so much in vogue, to the great satisfaction of Lady Wentworth and the housekeeper. Lady Wentworth often boasted how much Mr. Lawson's skill saved her in this one article. Alas ! she saved in her perfumer's bill—but she lost an estate !

Meantime, the preparations for the twenty-first anniversary of that remarkable and distinguished event, the birth of Horace Wentworth, were carried on with unremitting industry and expense. Alas, poor youth ! he was destined to be immortalized in his brief, yet dark, career, by circumstances

which mortal foresight was neither strong enough to avert, nor to unravel. A fever hung about him; and although Mr. Peters, from Ardham, attended three times a day, leaving a dose or two behind him each time, the young baronet neither grew worse nor better; some people thought, considering the care taken of him, that he ought to have been the one or the other. Nevertheless, he did not amend.

Lady Wentworth became anxious, not lest he should not recover, for she was too much accustomed to have everything her own way not to expect—almost to insist—that he should, and even to swear with Uncle Toby, that “he should walk again,”—(though it is to be feared that there would be no recording angel to blot out *her* oath)—but she was anxious lest Horace, *her* Horace, should not have read enough to compose, and nerves enough to pronounce, a set speech to his friends, and to the flower of the county who were to be assembled at the feast in the great hall on the eventful day. For Horace could never even be taught “My name is Norval;” he had neither of the three requisites for a speaker—head, courage, voice; and then he had an awkward

trick of winking his eyes, as he spoke ; which, from the time she could remember — as Lady Wentworth was wont to deplore, — he had persevered in the more the more she told him of it. His voice when not excited was husky and indistinct. He spoke to his plate, as his mother told him. When exerted, it was shrill as a peacock's, and every one who heard it was fain to wish that he would always address himself to his plate.

There was no time to be lost, however, in lamentations. The momentous subject of the baronet's dress, — his dress for the dinner, — his suit for the ball, — his riding-suit the day after — the choice of his knee-buckles and shoe-buckles, — the regulation of his hair, and other minor points, were all to be decided and discussed. Some people thought that the mental and physical energy aroused by the dissertations on satins for waistcoats and superfines for coats, and cambrics, and velvets, kept the poor baronet alive longer than he would have lived, arousing the flickering flame of life within him ; as when you irritate a caterpillar, or a beetle, it writhes and revives, with a sort of reproach to you in its mute agonies. And with sarsenets, and

cut velvets, — and Elliott's red, — and with brilliants, and brooches was Sir Horace — a creature on the verge and brink of eternity — mentally fed and renovated.

All the county were invited for the grand occasion, and there were servants riding up to the lodge daily, hourly, with answers and congratulations; and despatches sent out daily to supply the places of recusants with other guests; and there were such discussions as to who were, and who were not, eligible. The blood that had been extinct for centuries was raked out and analysed, even "storied urn" and "animated bust," were cited to prove the high antiquity and irreproachability of some; and the verse that "teaches the rustic moralist to die" was contemptuously quoted to prove how "*low*" were others laid. Old feuds were fiercely recalled, for Lady Wentworth never "pardon," — that was her boast; and the inherent spirit of persecution which afterwards blazed forth with horrible fury, was exemplified, faintly indeed, in the unrelenting malignity with which she resuscitated all that could lower and mortify (if they knew it) those who had ever offended her.

Adeline, meantime, participating little in

the concerns of the family, enjoyed a degree of felicity, a brief space of happiness, long — long remembered. A beneficent spirit seemed to have settled on her husband's shoulder, to warn him, by a secret talisman, — such as we read of in "Tales of the Genii," — of what he should shun — what follow. Stanhope Floyer had suddenly become perfect; he was again transformed into the lover: his high, and sometimes flighty, spirits were subdued, and there was oftentimes a degree of melancholy in his manner which Adeline trusted and prayed — oh, how earnestly she prayed, — might be repentance. For her love for Stanhope was of that true and lofty kind, that looks not only to temporary peace, that seeks not merely to solace transient evils, but that hopes, and aspires, and languishes, to gain for its object that peace "which the world cannot take away;" that inward and reasonable consciousness of redemption which the Christian soul would grasp for others as well as for itself.

But whilst she felt quite happy, quite secure about her husband, for she believed that she saw into the depths of all his thoughts, Adeline could not comprehend Mr. Lawson. *His* miraculous change puzzled

her. Partly, she attributed it to the fondness for science which the accomplished and versatile Lawson, — he who had once been the human personification of ceremonial on the chalked floor of a Bath assembly-room — now incessantly displayed. Yet even in these, the calmest and least envied of pleasures, the close and sinister character of Lawson might, Adeline thought, be discerned. Distrust and dislike had sharpened her discrimination in respect to *him*; love had weakened her acuteness to her husband's failings.

It so happened that Adeline, the victim as she may be deemed of Lawson's influence over her husband, was destined to be the only individual who witnessed one of those actions, presumptive as they were deemed of guilt, the exposure of which influenced the fate of Lawson. Her bed-room — one of those spacious, yet low, paneled apartments, warm and gloomy, in which cowards at night — and I can speak from experience — are wont to require a rushlight, and apt to look under beds, and into closets, and to bolt and lock doors, was at a very remote part of the house, and was almost the last of a *suite* of sleeping-rooms, or dressing-rooms, which

were now trimmed out for the expected visitors to the hall. Beyond this room a strait stair, with balustrades, conducted to a gallery above the *suite* of bed-rooms, into which doors of smaller apartments opened. This gallery Millicent had once or twice shewn to Adeline, it had been the early scene of her own and her young brother's few unfettered joys, the retreat in which Millicent might dirty her pinafores, and then turn them inside out; and Horace play at leap-frog, without mamma screaming out that his brains would be injured. Poor boy! there was no occasion to enlarge upon the manifest intention of nature, by making those said brains softer than they were.

The gallery had a rocking-horse—that last vestige of infancy in many a house—and a chamber-horse in it, and a picture or two of plain old aunts or poor clergymen brothers looked reproachfully from the lower part of the wainscot. The aunts were too shabby and ugly to be hung up, and the clergymen were not worth nails and cord. It was much to give them even the gallery to stare from: curates and tutors whom nobody cared for but their luckless wives; or the numberless progeny which they were sure

to leave. The bed-rooms were full of lumber, — of chests, and papers, which wanted Mr. Upcott to rescue them; and choked up by old-fashioned chairs, such as one now sees varnished by Pratt, and revered in Wardour-street, and prized in the libraries of the great.

At the end of this doleful gallery, in which the wind sighed, and into which the doors of the bed-rooms had a trick of slamming, and through which, doubtless, ghosts walked at midnight in companies, there were three small rooms, still designated the chaplain's rooms. Not that Lady Wentworth's handsome, sleek chaplain ever slept there, but they were reputed to have afforded shelter, in the time James II., to a goodly protestant divine, who was thought to be safer in the days of persecution in that lofty height, than he would have been on the ground-floor. Now one of these rooms, so remotely situated, was Mr. Lawson's laboratory, wherein he distilled the waters which had attracted the admiration and gratitude of the house-keeper — a great economist in distribution, but not, as it was sometimes said, in appropriation.

It struck Adeline as curious, and afterwards the recollection had its due, or over-

due, importance, that once, when asked by Lady Wentworth hastily to call Mr. Lawson, she found the door of his mysterious laboratory half open. She was about to enter, when she was suddenly repulsed, and the door as suddenly shut to. It was true that the voice of Mr. Lawson, in bland accents, apologised graciously for his mistake, as he called it, and declared that he had concluded that she was his valet—a troublesome fellow who knocked down all his retorts; but still the invitation to enter was not cordial, nor would it have been eagerly accepted, for a peculiar odour, pleasant yet overpowering, drove her gladly into the gallery. There was predominant one smell—recalled, where?—in the gloom of a fearful night, in the chamber and presence of death?

The days were now so sultry, and the horses were so much employed in fetching and carrying things for the approaching fête to and from Ardham, that it became a sort of fashion in the house to ride before breakfast; a custom which the early hours of those days facilitated. Lady Wentworth often had her steed ready waiting for her at the iron gates which opened into the lawn, at seven. Sometimes Mr. Stanhope Floyer

rode with her ladyship, sometimes Mr. Lawson, sometimes her groom; and she cantered off to the Grange, or to the Home Farm, or to the Keeper's Lodge, desirous of seeing that all was right, before she gave up her stewardship.

As far as worldly affairs went, she had no reason to fear the scrutiny of guardians. Had she, weak and yet ambitious as she was, fulfilled her stewardship as the parent, the responsible parent to whom the welfare of a soul is entrusted? Had she cherished good principles, established good motives? Could she dare to hope that at the final day she might present the released spirit of her son to her Maker before the judgment-seat? Let us not judge this self-deceived, this much-chastised, woman! Let us rather apply to our own hearts the awful question. Let us not judge her — years have passed away since the proud spirit of Lady Wentworth combated with adversity: her race hath passed away — her errors and her grievous calamities rest in the tomb. A judgment has fallen on her posterity, and her lands have become the inheritance of strangers.

A few days before the commemoration of his birth-day, Sir Horace was pronounced

convalescent. Lady Wentworth, poor woman! was in high spirits, and Mr. Peters, the apothecary, rose ten degrees in favour.

“It’s just the turn of the complaint, depend upon it, my good madam,” said the purblind Mrs. Heneage; “it began of a Thursday, it will go off of a Thursday—very lucky that! I own I don’t conceit that any thing good can begin of a Friday. I never set out of a Friday; I think it tempting Providence! There’s your husband”—looking at Adeline—“talks of traveling as far as Macclesfield to-morrow! I would gainsay that, that I would. Those that set off of a Friday seldom come back as they went.”

“It would be a capital thing for me if I did not,” said Stanhope; “for I go poor, and I might come back rich.”

He laughed as he spoke, but there was a melancholy in the tone, a forced character in the laugh; and a forced laugh pains more than a gush of honest tears to those who hear it. This caused Adeline’s gaze to rest with some anxiety upon him.

He turned away; but, in a moment afterwards, he looked at Adeline and beckoned to her to join him. He was standing out-

side an open window on the mossy lawn; and when Adeline drew near to him, he took her hand with more than his usual courtesy — with affection, and moved on in silence, as if he wished to speak to her in private.

“Have you anything to say to me?” asked Adeline, looking at the half-averted face, upon which she fancied she even saw something like a tear.

“Nothing!” replied Stanhope, in his usual careless way. “How warm it is!”

“Let us turn into that laurel walk,” said Adeline. “By-the-bye, this reminds me,” — and she pulled, as she spoke, the wreath-like white and delicate flower of the cherry-laurel, now in full blossom, which was disclosed between its varnished leaves. “This morning, Stanhope, I awoke with a most singular impression on my mind—a very singular impression; it was an undefined, yet distressing apprehension—I could not sleep again; and there was a noisy little bird that builds in the corner of our window—you have complained of it—that chirped as if purposely to arouse me. So I partly dressed myself, and threw open the closet window—you were fast asleep.”

“Very likely.”

“ Yes, but listen to me. It was such a morning! there was not a cloud, and the birds were in full flutter and song, and this turf looked so cool, that I came out upon the lawn. Well, just as I was coming down those terrace-steps I saw Mr. Lawson—earlier than myself, you see! I cannot think what he was about. What do laurel-leaves make?”

“ What do laurel-leaves make?” returned Stanhope, abruptly; “ garlands for poets, I suppose; isn’t that the orthodox version of their destiny?”

“ Yes; but in sober earnest—can they be applied to any culinary or chemical purpose?” asked Adeline, in a low and faltering tone.

The start which Stanhope gave, as she spoke, made her mute for some time. They were both mute—for *he* did not, or could not, answer her question.

“ Then why is Mr. Lawson so busy in gathering them?” pursued Adeline, as if the question had been answered. “ He was quite engrossed at these bushes this morning; and it did not seem to me as if he liked any one to observe him. I *have* heard,” she added, “ that a deadly poison may be distilled from these shining and fragrant leaves.” She pulled a laurel-leaf as she spoke.

“Well, I know nothing about it,” said Stanhope, rousing himself from a reverie. The words were spoken in a fearless, open manner. Adeline thought little about it at the time; but often — oh! how often — did her memory dwell upon those accents, and recal that beloved voice, when after-events came thickening like briers in her path of life. How often she recurred, gratefully, to that *last* conversation — for the last it proved, that Stanhope and she held together at Coughton.

At dinner that day all was congratulation. Sir Horace had been up and dressed, and had been down among his rabbit-hutches — he was very fond of rabbits. They were not unlike himself, stupid, harmless, and living for no obvious purpose but to be a prey to stronger brutes. And the young baronet soon to enter on years of discretion had been exercising his weak limbs in chasing poor frightened long-eared simpletons round the back yard. All this was very pretty and delightful, and Sir Horace began to be quite the idol of Lady Ellen’s imagination. She had her pets as well as he, and her life and that of her future partner promised to be as dove-like as possible.

Lady Wentworth walked through the state

rooms in the evening, followed by fat Lady Ellen and Mrs. Heneage, who admired and touched everything they saw. There was a pleased expression on Lady Wentworth's countenance that evening, of good augury to servants and visitors. Adeline and Lady Theodora were calmly happy; and the declining sun never fell upon a party, as it seemed, so united in heart and so beaming with hope, as that which was assembled in the drawing-room that night.

At nine o'clock Mr. Peters came, and pronounced his patient to be nearly well, but recommended one dose; one more dose to be administered in the morning—a “sort of farewell to physic,” Mr. Lawson called it—“just to bid the doctor and his nostrums good-b'ye, handsomely.”

Dawn came joyously to bless the next morning,—the Friday which Mrs. Heneage had so strongly disapproved of for Stanhope Floyer's journey. By six o'clock, in spite of her fears, he was at some distance from the hall; Adeline, who had of late been restless, watched him from her closet-window, now round towards the coach-yard. He looked up once and smiled, but though kindly, sadly. He was to return on the morrow. “How foolish am I,”

thought Adeline, "to dwell on the absurdity of that old lady's prejudices. How wrong am I to distrust the future when I have been *so* sustained. Stanhope!"—She leaned out of the window at this moment to catch a momentary glance of his fine, erect form as he galloped down the avenue,—“Stanhope, dearest, adieu! adieu! He hears me not,” she said calmly, as she shut down the window and prepared to dress, flattering herself that she should be the first to brush the dew from the lawn that day.

Alas! how little we can tell what we shall do, even from dawn to noon! Lady Wentworth's horse was standing by the great iron gates at seven that day, and the groom was wearied by her long tarrying; but that morning she came not forth to her accustomed ride—nor the morrow—nor for many morrows.

Lady Wentworth, previous to setting out, went into the sleeping-room occupied by her son. He had been disturbed by a servant, who came to get some leathern straps belonging to a net out of a closet. It was now time, in Lady Wentworth's opinion, to give her son the last draught prescribed by Mr. Peters on the preceding evening. The careful mother read the label, shook the potion well, and gave it

to her son to drink. She remarked, as in shaking it she spilled some of the medicine upon the table, that it had a nauseous smell. The spoiled creature of care, the centre of all her heart's affections, remonstrated, and some little demur was made—but the mother of despotic sway prevailed. Sir Horace submitted, and swallowed the draught. The mother, whose sole object it had been in life to guard him from ills common to all, *gave him that dose.*

Lady Wentworth was standing, looking out upon the front lawn to see if her groom walked her horse about properly, when a strange noise caused her to turn round and observe her son. He was struggling to keep down the medicine which parental hands had administered. Nature stood his friend for a time, but destiny prevailed. After some efforts, he succeeded in retaining the dose; the mother's fond gaze was riveted on her son with satisfaction, for she perceived him close his eyes as if to fall asleep. She left him, and was about to descend to take her ride. But, on the stairs, one of those mysterious warnings which we call presentiments, arrested her footsteps. A tremor shook that strong and haughty frame. She remembered a certain rattling, or, as she

afterwards described it, "gurgling in his throat," which had concerned her, when the doctor had swallowed,—a certain impulse possessed her, and she turned back.

The curtains were closed, and the room was still—*so* still, that the mother rejoiced to find her son had fallen asleep. She stole round to the bed, and stood beside it. In an instant, her face, her lips were blanched and livid; her eyes were set in one fixed stare of wild dismay. She shrieked not, spoke not, for even in the frenzy of grief Lady Wentworth's cool head and strong nerves restrained her not; she was a mother, and she would not startle or alarm her son. Yet the sight she saw might well have excused a paroxysm of anguish as that which she had seen when Wentworth checked. Her son, her only child, was lying senseless; his eyes upraised, his teeth clenched, and his chest heaving. The damps of death sat on his brow, and his colourless lips were covered with a frothy foam.

The mother was alone: not a sound reached her ear, but her loneliness, fear, and grief moved her not—she thought of aid, of help, and in an instant she rushed from the chamber. In the moment she reached the hall, she opened

self the door, and calling her groom to her, despatched him with breathless haste to Ardham for medical assistance. As she returned she dispatched another messenger to bid Mr. Lawson come to her quickly.

She sped back to the chamber of her son. By this time the household were dispersed about the galleries, and Lady Wentworth was followed by an old and experienced servant. This woman, whose simple words were to one individual, fate, was hanging over the body of the expiring youth, wiping the froth from his mouth and the damp dew from his face, whilst the stupified mother stood holding by the bed-post, shaking in every limb, when Mr. Lawson gently walked into the room.

The sight of his unruffled countenance—the sound of his voice—restored Lady Wentworth to recollection. Her accustomed dependence on Lawson's judgment returned to her. He calmly inquired, wherefore her ladyship had sent to him?

“Look—look—there!” she cried, pointing to the ghastly visage of the expiring youth. “Can you—can *you* not help me? Will he die?” she screamed in a voice and tone of agony.

Lady Wentworth was too absorbed in her

own feelings to watch the countenance of her son-in-law, as she addressed him : but Catherine Amos, the old servant before-mentioned, noted it well. No sign of surprise disturbed the equanimity of Mr. Lawson's deportment.

“ And in what manner,” asked Mr. Lawson, advancing towards the bed, “ has Sir Horace been seized ? ” His eyes turned for an instant on the hideous face of the youth, as he spoke : life was fast ebbing away ; the hands were already cold ; the chest had nearly ceased to heave ; the eyes, upraised, were turning as it were into their sockets—only a very small portion of the dilated pupil was now visible.

“ Upon giving him this medicine,” said Lady Wentworth, gasping for utterance, “ he

heard for an instant. Awful signal that the bonds of the immortal spirit are unloosed! Lady Wentworth knew the sign. She looked — she gazed in silence upon the clammy lips and marble brow. The servant, who saw that all was over, — that this was *death*, placed her hand, as such persons do, on the eyelids of the ill-fated boy; in a brief space, a very brief space of time, that distorted and haggard face was calm: he slept!

Lady Wentworth was not a woman whose feelings could deceive her. She wrung her hands as the last faint gasp ceased, to be heard no more. Passionate sobs broke from one unused to weep: then she started up—a sudden recollection seemed to return — “Where is the bottle? What, sir!” she shrieked, as she turned to Lawson, “have you emptied it? There was some medicine left in it; wherefore have you put water in the phial?”

“Only,” said Lawson, calmly, “to taste the mixture: it might not be safe else.”

“True!” replied Lady Wentworth, and she turned again to gaze upon her son.

The servants now assembled, and in the confusion of the moment it was not observed that the basin into which the contents of the phial had been thrown, and the phial itself,

were all, no one knew how, removed from the room. All observations were suspended by the awfulness of the effect, by the fixed and tearless countenance of the mother, by the confusion and dismay of the household; and conjecture was silenced until the apothecary should arrive from Ardham, and instruct the astounded bystanders *what* they were to believe. But Mr. Lawson was willing to save good Mr. Peters that trouble; for he diligently spread it as his opinion among the household, that Sir Horace died in consequence of getting his feet wet while fishing in the brook.

CHAPTER VI.

“Be Nature’s light extinguished, let the Sun
Withdraw his beams, and put the world in darkness,
Whilst here I howl away my life in sorrows.”

CAIUS MARIUS.

AND the house thus visited with sorrow was closed up ; and the gay decorations of its stately apartments were left as unfinished mementoes of the uncertainty of life ; and Lady Wentworth took to her apartment, and refused all consolation. In this extremity of her sorrow, the character of her daughter — a daughter whom she had scarcely loved, and whom she had neglected for the lost idol of her proud heart — rose in its tenderness and simplicity to real elevation.

Millicent now devoted herself to an unthankful and even unkind parent, who *almost* insinuated that death had taken the only being that she loved. Millicent well knew how much less sorrow her mother would have felt had *she* been taken ; but she concealed her bitter

tears, determined to remember the sorrow, not the unkindness, and resolved, whilst she lived her mother should never have reason to suppose that the child who loved her most was gone.

The worldly, especially when that worldliness is connected with hereditary property, have many sore and bitter feelings to be added to their sum of natural sorrow. Lady Wentworth had for years been accustomed to the sole management of the Coughton estate; she expected on her son's accession to have had the sole management of it still. Power was grateful to her overbearing disposition and arbitrary will; but by the will of her late husband, the landed property of Sir Horace

panying varieties which a naturally violent and vindictive spirit would have afforded; for the medical man, Mr. Peters, on being requested by Lady Theodora Floyer to examine the body, declared that there was no occasion, as the cause of the death was manifestly Sir Horace's general ill-health: and as, in the confusion of her mind, Lady Wentworth forgot the particular circumstance of the bottle,—and as she alone was witness to the sudden extinction of the young man's life, the conjectures connected with his death were speedily silenced.

There were guardians to be apprised, and relations to be informed, of the young baronet's death; and as Mr. Lawson had always acted in the capacity of the next-of-kin, he acted in this capacity now. Laconic and very proper epistles were soon despatched to various parties whom decorum pointed out; and the sudden demise of the heir of Coughton was, in each of these important letters, laid to the account of wet feet, and the few little fish which poor Sir Horace, with the aid of five servants, had ensnared in his net.

This was the business of the first day after that on which Coughton House from a scene of social happiness had been changed into a tomb-

like silence! Yes, all was still in that dreary old mansion, long since desecrated and deserted; the servants flitted about through the corridors with stealthy footsteps, as if noise could awaken the dead! Lady Wentworth, stretched on her bed, with the heavy damask curtains closed around her, refused the visits of the chaplain, and declared that she would never more quit that room, — never more see daylight, — never, never cease to bewail her loss! O woman! short-sighted and rebellious, little canst thou know what scenes and offices the future will bring!

The evening of Friday drew on: it was spent, not as of late it had been, in loitering among the flowers and statues of the old-fashioned pleasure-grounds, or in hanging over the stone balustrades of the steps which led on to the terrace, watching “the star that calls the bee to rest,” or scenting the mingled odours of the honeysuckle and the jasmine, friends of dull night: such tranquil pleasures were suspended, — perhaps never, in that gloomy house, to be renewed.

In a remote parlour, dimly lighted, sat Mrs. Heneage, Lady Ellen, and Adeline. The intended bride had shown no intensity of feeling at the intelligence of Sir Horace’s death. She

first wondered how he could ever take so much medicine; then she wondered how Lady Wentworth could give it to him; then she wondered if he knew that he was dying; next she wondered if he was really dead. There was an old tale of an old house somewhere in Warwickshire that her nurse had told her, of a young lady being buried in a vault in the parish church; three days after the lady was buried another funeral took place; when "lo and behold!" the defunct young lady was found lying on the steps of the vault, with part of her arm eaten away!

The three ladies drew their chairs nearer together as Lady Ellen finished her narrative.

"Good Lord! Nelly," said old Mrs. Heneage; "you make my flesh creep. Oh! oh!—a coffin bounced out of the fire that very instant—Lord a'mercy!"

"And don't you remember, Aunty, the winding-sheet Bess saw in the candle last night? It is as true as true," said the young lady, opening her blue eyes full at Adeline.

Mrs. Heneage shook her head. "'Twas a good old custom in my days to have a horse-shoe before the door for luck. I wonder my Lady Wentworth is so bold as to do away with all these observances! I conceit she will

repent of it! but she always was a daring woman. I remember, before her son was born, she stuck her pincushion herself! — I couldn't bear to look at it. The other day—”

“—Ah! I know what you mean!” said Lady Ellen, expressively.

“—If it hadn't been for me, the salt-cellar would have been thrown down! I don't like to see it—I don't like to see it—but Lady Wentworth only laughed. She'll not laugh again!”

“Aunt refused to go down to dinner at Sir Timothy Tindal's, when there were only thirteen, and I think she was right,” said Lady Ellen, looking at Adeline with a sort of triumph. There is a triumph in some people's minds when affairs, whether of life or death, go wrong.

“Wasn't this the night as Mr. Floyer was to come back, my dear,” asked Mrs. Heneage, with a start of recollection. “One, two, three, four, five—why it's nine o'clock!”

The old lady took off her spectacles; and fixed her eyes, with a meaning look, upon those of Adeline; as much as to say remember my prediction.

“I did think he possibly *might* come home to-night,” replied Adeline, turning from her; ‘but he said to-morrow.”

“ Oh ! to-morrow ! Ellen, uncross your feet, my love ; you will have crosses eno'. My father was Sheriff for Barkshire, Mrs. Floyer, yet he wouldn't even have gone to the 'sides of a Friday ; he'd sooner have laid a-bed all day.”

After paying this tribute to the merits of her parent, Mrs. Heneage, as if she had done her duty, took up her knitting and put on her spectacles.

“ My eyes are not what they were ; Nelly my love, take up this stitch—hark !—didn't you hear a rustling, like a silk gown, in the next room ?”

“ Perhaps—perhaps,” said Adeline, and with a momentary expectation she threw open the door which disclosed the deep recesses of a large and dark library.

Stanhope Floyer, whom she had fancied might be returned, was not there ; but Adeline's eye caught the receding figure of a man, as he vanished at the opposite door. She fancied it was Mr. Lawson. What could he be doing in that dark room listening ? and wherefore ? Retreating to the parlour, Adeline, lost in thought, was deaf to the retrospective and prophetic observations of Mrs. Heneage ; deaf to Lady Ellen's wonderments who would take care of Sir Horace's dogs, or who would have

his birds and rabbits;—insensible to a long dissertation of Mrs. Heneage's on the nature and ornaments of coffins, and on the delights (to beholders) of lying-in-state; nor was she able to enjoy an historical account of the escutcheons such as the octogenarian lady had witnessed in generation after generation; hatchments, which whilst she, the sturdy old tree had been left standing, had been hung over the tombs of the young and brave. An undertaker would have revelled in the conversation that night. Mrs. Heneage was practised in all the paraphernalia of death, perfect at a funeral. She was just giving her opinion on winding-sheets in general, and expressing her abomination at the rising superiority of shrouds, when the door opened, and a servant summoned the ladies to prayers.

There is always something impressive in the hallowed custom of assembling high and low to kneel before the equalizing throne previous to the repose of night. Even Lady Wentworth's harsh features were wont to be softened as she returned, severally and scrupulously, the distinctive bows and curtseys of her numerous household as they entered and retired from the prim reverence of the high and mighty Abigail to the sudden drop of the rosy-faced

dairy-maid. And all were there; the powdered footmen, ranged according to their degree, below the house-steward and chief-butler; then came the coachman and second coachman, a class of themselves, looking askance, with jealous dignity, upon the lacquey race, between whom and themselves, there had been a running warfare for these forty years; next, the tribe of grooms, helpers, postilions, foot-boys, and spit-boys; then, in old houses, not abolished. The stable-men and gardeners were not domiciled.

A high reading-desk was placed in the centre of the wall, with a hassock for the chaplain. It was customary for Lady Wentworth, as lady-paramount, until her son came of age, to take the seat on the right hand of the chaplain, her son on the left. The two chairs were there, but they were vacant. The chaplain, ere he began the prayers, looked as if he expected that Lady Theodora and Mrs. He-neage would take them, but they did not. Mrs. Lawson was absent, and after a temporary and awkward pause, the chaplain was about to begin—. But at this instant Mr. Lawson came into the hall from a side door. It was remarked by the servants, among whom self-arrogated authority is never popular, that

he took the empty seat,—the seat once occupied by Sir Horace.

It was remarked by another person, deeply, to herself inexplicably, interested in his proceedings, that he too prayed, yes, he *prayed*.

A solemn silence succeeded the dispersing of that crowd of servants; and without exchanging many words, the guests of the house retired to their chambers. Adeline could not sleep; thoughts, imperative, that would not be quiet, came rushing into her troubled mind.

Just as she was, at last, sinking to sleep, she was aroused by a heavy load, as it seemed, stopping or being dropped at the door. Adeline was not courageous, and she shook with

gown and opened the door. No, it was not Stanhope; it was Lady Ellen, just recovering her faculties after a fainting-fit.

Adeline supported her into her room. "O, Mrs. Floyer! oh, madam! oh! oh! did you hear it strike twelve? It did strike twelve; that accounts for it. I was only just going to aunt's room, when I saw—I am sure I saw a figure turn down the west gallery, towards Sir Horace's room, it had something in its hand, and was all in white; and it was he, I'm sure—his father walked, they say; oh me! oh me!"

"Nonsense, dear Lady Ellen—you don't believe in ghosts, surely, with your good sense!"

"O, but it's very impious not to believe in them," cried Lady Ellen;—"hark! footsteps," and actually at this moment receding footsteps were heard down the gallery.

"It is only—only Mr. Lawson," said Adeline, opening the door and looking after the retiring apparition. "There—it is one o'clock! I wonder what he does at this hour," she added, thoughtfully. "He had something in his hand! and look he has dropped something white on the floor. Shall we go and see what it is?"

"I could not for my life, but you, you may Mrs. Floyer."

"It's only lime," said Adeline, returning, and examining a white powder which she had picked up. "Lime! what can he do with it?"—and she shook the powder from her hand into the empty grate.

But Lady Ellen would not be disappointed of her ghost. A ghost was, in those days, among the old-fashioned and illiterate, an invariable appendage to the house of death. Whether it is that an inherent persuasion and consciousness dwells in our minds that the spirit which has lately left the clay hovers near us—a notion of which those who have recently seen death find it difficult to divest themselves;—or whether it is impossible to believe that we have so wholly parted from that which has, but a brief space since, been *with* us;—it is difficult for the soundest minds and for the strongest nerves, to support our frame unshaken when we pass the chamber which encloses what is so still and cold; in which no footstep can disturb the dull ear, nor cause any difference to the senseless, passionless clay which lies within it.

But in former days a type was always to be discovered before death—a ghost after it.

Those old superstitions are not quite extinct. Still they affright the poor, ignorant, and often lonely watcher by the humble dead; and they are most infectious: let us not too harshly condemn them, until we can, at all times and under all circumstances, declare that we know them not.

Daylight came to console Lady Ellen's fears; it came to aid the necessary preparations, not for a joyful anniversary, but for a solemn and splendid funeral. The darkened remains of a frail and immature form were to be mocked by all the ceremonials that pride, and not affection, have invented, as if, in those crested biers, by those mutes and pursuivants, by all the life, and pomp, and bustle, that wealth can collect, to ridicule the cold decay within! But it was fitting that to the heir of Coughton all wonted observances should be paid, and they *were* paid.

Lady Wentworth was first revived from the poignancy of her sorrow by the intelligence that the sable entertainment was completed; the walls were hung with black; the escutcheon of Sir Horace was planted against his coffin; the coffin itself the admiration of all who were connoisseurs was completed; the candles were ready, the mutes were in their

places; the corpse itself (many a poor corpse is bepraised more than when it could claim sympathy for itself) was exceedingly fair to look upon. All those who were permitted to enter Lady Wentworth's apartment counselled her Ladyship to visit the scene so glowingly described, ere yet—ah! ere yet,—corruption had contaminated the wasting frame of him whom she loved.

Lady Wentworth had never yet had courage to look upon that young form; she had shrunk from a revival of the remembrance of the dying agonies. On the fourth day after the death of Sir Horace, she at last summoned resolution to arise from her bed, and, leaning on her daughter, to visit the chamber of death.

The coffin was covered with a black velvet pall, richly decorated; the mutes, who stood on either side of the bed, prepared to up-raise it, when the chaplain who had promised to receive Lady Wentworth in the chamber of death, came forward and whispered his regrets to Mrs. Lawson, that, by some mistake the coffin had been closed that morning at day-break, it was soldered up; the undertaker from Ardham was in fault.

“No matter, sir,” said Lady Wentworth, interrupting the condolences of the clergyman; for her pride could not receive sympathy. “How was this?” she asked, sitting down in great agitation at the foot of the bed.

Lady Wentworth fixed her dark eyes sternly, fiercely, upon Millicent—at that instant, a suspicion, sudden, transient, poignant, flashed across the bereaved mother’s mind.

“Is it,” she said, gasping—“by *your* orders that I am prevented from seeing my son’s remains, or by those of Mr. Lawson? Am I not mistress in my house now?” she added, in a voice of anger.

“Mother, my dear mother, now, and ever,” said Millicent, sinking on her knees and melting into tears. “Indeed—indeed, I knew nothing of it, but Mr. Lawson has good reasons.

Mr. Lawson will explain all when he comes home. It is not *here*," she added, timorously, "that words of contention—" her sobs stifled the close of the sentence.

"No," returned Lady Wentworth groaning; and rising, she walked with wonderful composure to the head of the bed; the pall had been withdrawn, and Lady Wentworth gazed with tearless eyes upon the coffin wherein lay the object for which she had lived, during the space of twenty years.

Suddenly, a reminiscence of something that had passed within that room, near that bed, came across her. She motioned to the attendants to replace the pall; and refusing the arm of the chaplain, she beckoned Dorcas, the old housekeeper, near her. Mrs. Lawson rushed forward to offer her arm, but repelling her abruptly, Lady Wentworth quitted the room. She stopped, however, in the corridor with Dorcas.

"Tell me," she asked in a low tone, yet in hurried accents—"when my son died, where was the glass from which he last drank conveyed to? The apparel which he wore, when he died? Tell me, where are they?"

"Bless me," said Dorcas, affrighted at the eager question, "if I can remember—

Why my lady—surely Mr. Lawson knows—Mr. Lawson ordered them to be carried out by Susan—ay sure ! into the outer room.”

“Let Susan be called,” said Lady Wentworth; “send her to me, instantly ! instantly !” and without assistance, though with a tottering step, Lady Wentworth returned to her own apartment.

That day, she refused to see her daughter. The next day, and the next, she saw her not, neither Mr. Lawson; but her fancies, whatever they were, had so little foundation, that on the sixth day after her son’s decease Lady Wentworth again sent for her family, and received them as usual. They were shocked, at least Mr. Lawson was shocked, by the dejection, the apathetic dejection into which Lady Wentworth had now sunk. Whilst she had surmised that her son had not had fair play, that treachery, perhaps poison, had been at work, her spirit was aroused; there is a consolation, if we cannot recal the dead, in retracing their passage from life, especially when mystery hangs over it; this stimulus taken away, Lady Wentworth relapsed into her former condition—a gloomy and ungrateful sorrow.

CHAPTER VII.

"Oh! then I'm ruined! From this very moment
Has my good genius left me!"

CAIUS MARIUS.

WITHIN the walls of Coughton House, all seemed to be in a state of melancholy quiet; it was only the prolonged absence of Stanhope Floyer that disturbed some of its inmates. Since the luckless Friday morning he had neither been seen nor heard of; day after day, Adeline had trusted to receive a letter, but in those times posts were slow and uncertain, messengers and couriers were often employed instead; and the hope might reasonably be clung to of a letter having mis-

... were made as to
... in

frequently expressed about it. Adeline had almost trusted that Mr. Lawson might know of some folly, or difficulty, which might draw Stanhope — the heedless Stanhope — away; but Mr. Lawson professed himself unable to conceive what it might be.

It was in the midst of this dilemma that Sir Evelyn Wilmer, the nearest relative, on his mother's side, of the deceased baronet, arrived at Coughton Manor, previous to the funeral. Sir Tufton Tyrawley reached Coughton the same night; and Mr. Eustace Floyer was hourly expected. The very day* on which Lady Theodora was watching for his appearance, she was summoned to join him in London, in consequence of a dangerous attack of illness under which the young man was suffering. Lady Theodora bade Adeline an agitated adieu, for Adeline had declined accompanying her ladyship. She could not, whilst Stanhope's return was doubtful, his destination mysterious, leave Coughton, where every day she expected his return. Her impatience was now increasing to agony, and she could not help imagining that Mr. Lawson, in spite of his pretended ignorance, knew something of Stanhope's movements. Alas! to the wife who enters not into the

counsels of her husband! In *that* relation of society there should be *no* concealments.

It was a boisterous, gloomy morning when the interment of the young baronet in the parish church of Coughton took place. A full complement of neighbours and friends, who had known little of the deceased during life, attended to do him honour. A large body of tenantry followed on foot. County gentlemen from remote corners chatted and exchanged inquiries and intelligence in the mourning-coaches; there was a great deal of comfortable chat in those roomy vehicles after the first necessary compliments.

“A very melancholy occasion, this, sir! —Very suddenly Sir Horace came to his end. —Ah! poor young man! he hadn't long to think about it; — very shocking, — very, very shocking! — Fine crop of wheat this year, Mr. Stowe! — And pray how did the cattle go off at Ardham fair, Mr. Harding? Turnips are looking well, my good friend!”

Funerals are generally one piece of hypocrisy from beginning to end; the very horses, in their dyed propriety, look hypocritical, and the mutes and footmen are hypocrisy personified. Those who *really* mourn, — the tender female hearts, — the widow

and the orphan daughter, are left at home. The coaches are always filled with stout, worldly-looking old gentlemen ; — standing-dishes at funerals, like elderly ladies at balls. On this occasion, Mr. Lawson and his son, a fair and manly boy, were chief-mourners. Well might they be so called, for great cause had both to mourn that day.

Sir Evelyn Wilmer and Sir Tufton Tyrawley followed the chief-mourners. Then came the former tutor of the deceased ; the apothecary, Mr. Peters ; and afterwards the steward and house-steward. A numerous train of carriages closed the lengthened procession.

As it halted at the ivy-mantled gateway of the churchyard, crowds of villagers, not only from Coughton, but collected from adjacent hamlets and parishes, were standing to witness the ceremony. Among these, — many of whom had been born on the Coughton estate, most of whom could number many generations back, who had lived there, or on adjoining manors — a deep murmur, not only of grief for the untimely death of the young baronet, but of pity and indignation, was heard by the clergyman of Coughton, who stood in his gown, bare-headed, to re-

ceive the corpse into the church-yard. Mr. Powell, for that was the clergyman's name, was a downright intrepid man, of plain sense and blunt manners, too honest to have been selected by Lady Wentworth for her domestic chaplain; too pure in heart and life to mingle intimately with the accomplished but unprincipled Lawson, whose character was well known to Mr. Powell. He heard these whispers with secret awe; for a general opinion was already gaining ground in that simple village, that Sir Horace had not been "done well by."

Calm, however, and striving to fix his attention on the sacred and solemn duties which that day were allotted to him, Mr. Powell, walking at the head of the coffin, proceeded into the church. All within bespoke the greatness of the Wentworths. The escutcheons of that time-honoured race, waived in the chancel; the monuments of their ancestry half filled the little rural edifice; the well-lined pew spoke their local importance; the many gifts and records of the family, — the altar-piece supplied by one, — the cushions by another member of the race, — the very chalice and flagon given by a third, marked the bounty of the race; whilst ladies, bedight

in ruffs and wimples, and knights with folded hands and crossed legs, denoted its high antiquity; and now all, all, were in dust and ashes! Sir Horace, the last of his name, was about to be leveled with the rest; his nephew and lawful heir could only unite the name of Wentworth with one new and unhonoured in the county, the actual house of Wentworth expired with the once frail and now extinct frame of him who slept beneath that gorgeous pall.

And he who had finished irresponsibly his brief career, was that day to be buried. The clergyman, as he raised his voice to point the deep moral of those sentences, the import of which shall only be cancelled by eternity, sighed once or twice heavily, and his accents faltered. The rain had cleared away, and a bright sun cast a glow into the cold aisle wherein the mourners stood,—before them, the coffin. The countenance of Lawson, serious and calm, betrayed no change as he stood and listened to those words which shew us, if anything can, that our days are but ‘a span long,’ which mark in phrases of sublimity and pity the nothingness and vanity of that “vain shadow”—a worldly life. Did not the conscious man tremble, as

he listened to the heart-probing declaration: "Thou hast set our misdeeds before us, and our secret sins in the light of our countenance." No, not a fold in the black mantle which hung over his graceful form was moved,—not a muscle of his countenance was changed. It was not God whom Lawson feared.

The funeral attendants and chief-mourners moved into the churchyard, for the vault of the Wentworths opened into it, and was surmounted by a stately sarcophagus, closed round with iron rails, and headed by a vase. There were no inscriptions on this massive *memento*. The monuments of the Wentworths were all within the church. Around the tomb were the grassy mounds beneath which lay the 'fond forefathers' of the hamlet. An irregular pathway led from one extremity of the churchyard to the other; and along this, and beneath the dense shade of two massive yews, the young wife and mother and the hale ploughman stood side by side with the grey-headed labourer, who could remember, not only the day when the ill-fated Horace came of age, but when his father before him attained his twenty-first year!

“ Ah! that was a merry time ! ” whispered a decrepid old churl, in a smock-frock — old Abel, as he was called, a now helpless and harmless rustic, who was still employed about Coughton Manor-house in weeding, sweeping up leaves, and other subordinate offices — “ them bells pealed out lustily then.”

“ I did the last job for his honour,” said a bystander, in a deep, gruff voice. This man had numbered some seventy summers. He was one of those families of aristocratic antiquity which one still sometimes finds in rural villages. His race had dwelt in Coughton certainly since 1541, when parish registers were first introduced, as the old register of Coughton shewed — and how long before no one knew.

The speaker was a hale, though drooping, man, with a clear blue eye, expressive of natural shrewdness. His round, flat hat was now held in his hand, as a mark of respect to the scene before him, and his white hair fell about his broad shoulders.

“ I was a putting on my hedge-boots,” he continued; “ it was when father was keeper, and he wer out with his gun. ‘ Bill,’ says Nan, ‘ you need na put on your hedge-boots, — for his honour’s dead.’ ‘ His honour?’ says

I. 'His honour,' says she; 'come along wi' me to the hall.' 'Where's father?' says I. 'Father's out wi' the dogs,' says she. So I went along to the hall."

"But you did not lay the young un out!" said old Abel, jeering. It had been the hereditary privilege, be it remarked, of the Mileses, the name of the first speaker, to perform the last offices to the lords of the manor,—an office which gained the ancient house of Miles much envy among the poor folk, who could not see why their neighbours should enjoy this mark of favour and distinction. It is difficult in this life to say what does and what does not merit the distinction of exciting envy. But so it was in this poor village, even the mournful duty of "*streaking*," as it was then called, and in former times of the Wentworths, of "*winding* the corpse," of the lords of the manor, excited heart-burnings which were not repressed and varnished over as in politer circles.

"No, no!" answered old Miles, looking stupidly and sullenly forward; "I've to thank *him* for that," gazing moodily at Mr. Lawson, who had by this time taken his place with his son at the head of the vault.

"Hist, Bill!" exclaimed an imperative

female voice—that of Bill's "missus," as he truly called her. "The parson's a reading out of his'n book."

The emphatic voice of Mr. Powell was heard, and the villagers, as he read, suspended their murmurs. The yawning vault received its tenant. Some of the gentlemen descended after the coffin. Even Mr. Lawson politely picked his way down the steps. As he arose again to view his handsome face was pale — but that was natural.

Then the deep, dull toll of the great bell — a bell given in Popish times by some mighty abbot related to the family — a bell, the vibration of which the crumbling and dilapidated tower might scarcely now sustain — announced that the ceremony was at an end. The door of the vault was locked by the hand of the sexton — the grave had closed over the remains of Sir Horace Wentworth — but *not* for ever! and the assembled relatives and friends withdrew to their coaches. As they passed through the churchyard, the murmurs of the villagers who were collected, and who now amounted to more than one hundred, rose to something like a shout of disapprobation. The feelings of the common-people are al-

ways more or less exaggerated; but they have generally a foundation in truth. The honest hearts of these poor folks, devoted from their cradles to their manorial masters, — and one finds that devotion, faintly, still existing a relic of feudalism, — resented the quiet, private, manner of Sir Horace's death, and suspected its cause. Rumours had floated from the manor-house, and had spread from village to village. The old women, more especially, were offended — a dangerous crew to displease. At this period of the eighteenth century, the old custom of the like-wake, a sort of comfortable festival after the laying-out of the corpse, was not by any means obsolete; indeed, it is still retained in the north of England, though, like all other superstitions, it is speedily and happily wearing away. There had hitherto been a regular set of women employed in this office at the manor-house, and they were selected always from the same families; like the privilege of streaking, the like-wake was an hereditary tenure. From the time that the breath was out of the body until the poor remains were carried to the grave, four aged women, who had survived the recollection of feelings, and who were not born to the inheritance of nerves,

sat, night and day, by the bed and coffin of the defunct. But this time their services had been dispensed with — persons within the manor-house had been preferred; and the days of gossip and good cheer, and the nights of solemn comfort to these poor bodies, had been in the instance of Sir Horace's death, and in that instance only, dispensed with.

It was a dire offence, and Mr. Lawson, as manager of everything, was blamed and hated for it; and small grey eyes, underneath poking black bonnets, looked vindictively upon him as he walked with his white handkerchief before his eyes to the coach. And even the pretty boy, his son, as he stared, wondering, around him, shrank in terror from the fierce glances of those withered faces which his loveliness and innocence failed to soothe.

The procession returned to the manor-house, where the funeral feast, another popular observance which still obtains, I believe, in remote places, was prepared. Good cheer was provided for the yeomanry in the hall:—plenty of ale and beef for those who could not be accommodated there, at a small ancient public-house, over which dangled the Wentworth arms, where the clerk and sexton — those two

offices being united — took the head of the table, and the grave-digger the bottom.

When the gentlemen had collected in the dining-room of the manor-house, Sir Evelyn Wilmer, to the surprise of all present, was absent. "He had stepped in," it was said by Sir Tufton Tyrawley, who looked remarkably well in his new black, "to Mr. Jones's, the steward's, house, but would join the party presently." Whereupon the company sat down to a collation with a particularly good appetite, and without reflecting, as certain antiquaries have done, whether or not the funeral feast was borrowed from the *cæna feralis* of the Romans, thought it not beneath them to eat like Englishmen.

Sir Evelyn, meantime, was in close and low conversation with the grey-headed and respectable steward, in a substantial house just at the entrance of the village. Long and earnestly was their conference carried on; and when Sir Evelyn returned to the manor-house Mr. Jones walked there with him.

They did not join the funeral party, but remained in a small sitting-room, where Mr. Lawson was summoned to join them. At the end of an hour a message was sent to Mrs. Stanhope Floyer with Si Evelyn Wil-

mer's compliments to request the honour of an audience with her.

Adeline was alone. For nights she had not slept; nor was there, perhaps, in that old house, a heart more heavy, or a face more wan, than hers. She obeyed the summons instantly, and her cheek was flushed with hope—the hope that some intelligence had been gained of Stanhope—as she entered the room.

“Mrs. Floyer,” said Sir Evelyn Wilmer—one of those quiet, exact, worthy, stupid men, who are so often chosen to be executors and guardians—“I am happy to have the honour of seeing you. A mournful occasion, this, for my friend, Lady Wentworth. An only son—yes—an only son—one cannot be surprised that her mind is a good deal unhinged. Allow me, madam, to offer you a seat—you prefer sitting with your back to the window? Good.”

“Mrs. Floyer,” resumed Sir Evelyn, after the profusion of bows then thought necessary, “I have requested the favour of a little conversation. Don't be alarmed, madam; there is nothing in the least to concern *you*. You have not heard from Mr. Stanhope Floyer by to-day's post? The post

comes in here at nine o'clock. Ah! I remember it does—I am pretty sure it does.”

“Sir!” exclaimed Adeline, with clasped hands and a countenance of terror—“if you know anything of my husband; if you have heard anything of Stanhope—”

“We have not heard anything, my good madam; we look to *your* hearing. Be composed—now pray be composed, my dear good madam!”

“And has there then been nothing heard?” cried Adeline, sinking back in her chair in an agony of disappointment. “Oh! Mr. Lawson! this suspense is dreadful! Oh! cannot *you*,—cannot *you* tell me anything about him?”

“I am as much at a loss to account for his absence, as you, madam. I think it, indeed, most unfortunate”—and Mr. Lawson looked at Sir Evelyn Wilmer and the steward, as he spoke—“most especially at this time.”

The significant manner in which these words were uttered startled Adeline. There was a pause for some moments; a deep sigh burst from her oppressed heart. She looked appealingly at Sir Evelyn Wilmer.

“I am alarmed, and I know not why; a dread of something awful, fearful, shakes my

frame. I wish — I wish I knew the worst!" she added, rising, and looking timidly around her, as if she dreaded to gain the knowledge which she sought.

Sir Evelyn looked at Mr. Lawson, and Mr. Lawson looked at Sir Evelyn, as if they each wished the other to begin. But Sir Evelyn was one of those prosaic old gentlemen, accustomed to grand-juries and county meetings, who rather excelled in detailing a case. So, after bowing to Mr. Lawson, as if to apologise for taking precedence, he addressed himself to Mrs. Floyer.

"Here is a young gentleman, Mrs. Floyer—my late ward—Mr. Lawson's brother-in-law, who dies under age; it therefore devolves upon me, as guardian, to concern myself, not only about his property — the funded and landed property of Sir Horace — but as to the manner of his death. Mr. Jones here, who has lived on the estate some forty years, tells me the tenantry and common-people have a notion Sir Horace was poisoned — a very odd notion indeed, in a Christian country; but they have taken it up, and they lay the suspicion on some one in the house. Now as to myself and the other gentlemen who have attended this day to pay respect to Sir Ho-

race, we did not arrive until after the death." Sir Evelyn paused, and looked about for his snuff-box.

"Well, sir," said Adeline, her blanched lips almost refusing to utter the words: "on *whom* does the suspicion rest?"

"That, it does not become me to say," replied Sir Evelyn, closing his snuff-box with the accustomed tap. "There are very unpleasant rumours, indeed—very unpleasant rumours, certainly. It was a great pity that the body was not examined before interment—but my friend, Mr. Lawson, here, was so unconscious of anything particular—he was so thoroughly persuaded that Sir Horace caught his death, fishing—"

"Then why, Sir Evelyn," exclaimed Adeline, starting up, "am *I* to be addressed—why summoned here?" She gazed openly, intently, on the face of the guardian, as she spoke, and an expression of indignation lighted up her soft eyes with unusual brilliancy.

Sir Evelyn bowed—as he always did when a lady spoke to him, and turned towards Mr. Lawson. "Mr. Stanhope Floyer's absence, madam, at this particular season, madam, demands explanation. I wish to throw a stigma on no one; but I say it is odd."

"Mr. Lawson," cried Adeline, warmly—

“I call upon *you* to repel these insinuations against an absent friend. God only knows *where* he is! But wherever he is, a conscience unspotted from all that concerns this hapless young man attends him! His errors may be many—but of such guilt as this would be, I thank my Maker, he is incapable.”

She spoke with a fearlessness, a confidence in the truth of her assertions, that shook the suspicions of Sir Evelyn Wilmer, and gained her an advocate in the honest and plain-speaking steward, whose suspicions were differently directed.

“And have you, sir,” continued Adeline, indignantly turning to Lawson, “nothing—not one word—to urge for your friend—the friend who has blindly trusted you—who has followed you through the career of ruin and folly—”

“Stop, stop, madam,” exclaimed Sir Evelyn, touching Adeline’s arm with his forefinger. “Mr. Lawson is a highly-respectable, honourable man, my friend, the brother-in-law of my late ward—I cannot hear him taxed without reminding you that Mr. Lawson is now, in virtue of his son, the head of this house.”

“Sir,” replied Adeline, “pardon my vehe-

mence. Alas!" she added, whilst her eyes were suffused with tears—"it is wrung from my unhappiness. If I have been unjust—"

"Oh, say no more, *dear* Mrs. Floyer," exclaimed Mr. Lawson, coming forward, with an expression of kindness and condolence in his face. "I can perfectly, perfectly understand your feelings. Let us be friends;" and he extended his fair hand towards her.

Adeline took the handkerchief from her eyes, and looked at him for a moment. Undefined suspicions she had striven until this moment to check; but she could not touch his proffered hand—she recoiled—she turned from the man who of all others had done her the most injury in life; who now permitted, if he had not originated, the darkest hints to be thrown out uncontradicted against *her* husband, *his* friend. She averted her head; and the mild countenance of Lawson, as he looked upon her, was darkened by the gloomiest expression of sullen anger and revenge.

For once, the gentlest and tenderest of her sex, was implacable; the yielding, timid woman became irascible and inflexible; yet the softness of her nature prevailed; in the anger and determination of Adeline there

was a dignity which the violent invariably forfeit.

She demanded the particulars of those rumours, which, it was insinuated, affected her husband. They were vague, as they were groundless; and the sole shadow of probability which was attached to them, arose out of the circumstance that Stanhope Floyer had quitted Coughton the morning of Sir Horace's death. Mr. Lawson added, though unwillingly, as it seemed, "that by Stanhope Floyer's advice, Sir Horace had latterly left his medicine in the ante-room next to his apartment, in order that he might see it in passing through, and not forget to take it."

"I am now alone, without a friend to counsel me," said Adeline, as she rose and addressed herself to Sir Evelyn. "But Mr. Stanhope Floyer has a friend — a relation on whose sincerity I can depend. Mr. Lawson, I entreat you to do me the last favour I shall probably ever ask from you — to order my carriage, and to desire that the swiftest horses may be procured — I shall proceed to London to-night."

"What!" asked Sir Evelyn, "alone, and when the roads are so infested as they have been of late. At the sessions, last quarter —"

“— I have no time to fear, Sir Evelyn; my husband's reputation and honour are at stake. Suffer me to depart. Mr. Lawson! you and I shall meet no more! Remember me to Millicent.” Her voice faltered as she spoke. “She may sometime want a friend — I shall not be unfaithful.”

“I regret, truly,” observed Mr. Lawson, in a tone which contrasted, in the opinion of Sir Evelyn, advantageously with the resentment and ill-advised haste of Adeline, — “I regret extremely that Mrs. Stanhope Floyer should take amiss what I conceive it to be my duty to let fall, — my duty to my departed brother-in-law, whom I——”

“And have you always done your duty to him in *life*?” asked Adeline.

The question came from her almost involuntarily, and so suddenly, that Mr. Lawson did change colour. He was preparing a conciliatory reply, when Adeline rose to leave the room. But she departed not from the Manor-house that night. 'Ere her horses were ready, a message arrived to Mrs. Stanhope Floyer from Sir Evelyn Wilmer, to request that she would remain in her own chamber; and to intimate that none who were in the house would be allowed, until this unhappy affair was cleared up, to depart.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ But Death behind a marble tomb
Looks out upon his prey,
And smiles to know that heavenly bloom
Is yet of earthly clay.”

WILSON.

A FEW days after this conversation, a chariot, containing only one person, besides a servant who sat on the box, drew near to the Wentworth Arms, at Coughton. It was proceeding through the village, when suddenly, as if checked by the gentleman within, it stopped at the gate of the churchyard.

Four persons in black, and wearing scarlet cloaks, the costume of the medical profession in those days, were standing near the tomb which had so recently closed over the dead. The vault was open; the sexton and undertaker were there; Mr. Powell stood aloof in his plain clothes; and there was a considerable assemblage of spectators, with horror and dismay expressed in their countenances.

The body, which had lain in that silent enclosure but three days, was disinterred; the dead man was snatched from his melancholy retreat; the sacred grave where his sires slept was invaded.

In solemn silence, men appointed raised the coffin on their shoulders, and bore it, amid the murmurs and curses of an increasing crowd, to the Wentworth Arms. Here the coroner and a jury were empaneled, awaiting the horrible inspection of a decaying frame, in the vain hope of eliciting the cause of what was now universally declared to have been — murder!

The coroner had been solicited, by an ano-

with the crowd for some time, and listening to their remarks, found means to enter the inn; and seating himself in a long, low parlour, with sanded floor and a vociferous canary, announced to one of the persons who were engaged in the inquest, his intention to be present at the proceedings, as the nearest-of-kin to one whose character had been traduced — Mr. Stanhope Floyer.

“And has nothing been heard of that gentleman?” inquired Mr. Jones, the steward, from Mr. Eustace Floyer, as they were standing together, waiting until the court was prepared, and until the witnesses were called.

“Nothing! I have taken every possible means of ascertaining his fate; large rewards are offered; the Police have been diligent in their researches. I can only suppose,” added Eustace, in a low tone, “that Stanhope’s life has been sacrificed for some purpose connected with this affair.”

“You will break the affair slowly to his wife?” said Mr. Powell. “I saw her to-day. She is fearfully, alarmingly agitated: all self-command is at an end. I fear for her reason.”

“She shall have all that sympathy and — and friendship can do to soothe and support

her," replied Eustace, with much emotion; and he spoke not again for some time.

"There is a general persuasion in the neighbourhood," resumed Mr. Powell, after a pause, "that your relation knew nothing of the fatal event,—or that he has been got out of the way because he knew too much. I dare not say to whom the suspicions point."

Eustace answered only by a meaning look; and in a few minutes the three gentlemen were summoned to the jury-room.

A strange scene was here presented. The Coroner,—an elderly gentleman, in a bob wig, with spectacles kindly aiding nature, by giving an air of wisdom to the weak; with a jolly, rubicund visage, as if the tales of death and judgment which passed under review were wholesome rather than distressing,—a white fat hand, with a ring the size of a sixpence on the forefinger, and a pen held to note down the words of fate,—sat before a table, around which were seated twelve honest yeomen, whose sleepy visages were vastly overawed by a spectacle in front of the coroner.

Seated, or rather reclining, with Mrs. Lawson holding her smelling-bottle, in the deepest mourning, was Lady Wentworth. Her stern nature,—yes, even her iron nerves, were sub-

duced to childish weakness by a mother's sorrows, and by the awful, the unlooked-for, investigation of that frail and spare form which she had lately beheld in the grasp of death. At first she had resented, as an outrage, the summons of the Coroner, the collecting of the Jury; she had resolved to resist the inquiry, to plead illness, rather than to demean herself and her family by admitting the possibility that there had not been fair play. But when she heard on *whom* the suspicion rested, recollections that suggested thoughts such as never before she had cherished but for an instant, a gleam of daylight fell on the obscurity which involved that dark event which she had witnessed, of which she had been the agent, the mist of self-deception was penetrated—nor was the suspicion unwelcome. Never had the unhappy mother ceased to remember that *she* had given the fatal draught; that from *her* hands,—those hands which had ever been extended to protect and aid him,—her son had received the death-blow. Bitter, poignant had been the remembrance,—it was a cruel, a savage thought, worthy of the fiendish and remorseless spirit that devised it, to make the mother the agent of death;—it was avenged! Oh! how fiercely and doubly! How were the

sins of one generation, in this instance, visited upon the next !

Lady Wentworth had just recovered from a fainting-fit, when Eustace and Mr. Powell were admitted to the inquest. The revival of that awful morning, and of its fearful dream, the recurrence to the dreadful symptoms of dissolution,—the struggle with death,—the clammy brow, the convulsed frame,—had been too much for Lady Wentworth. She had revived, and was proceeding to relate what had happened after that lately-exhumed corpse had breathed its last.

“I was attending,” said the unhappy mother with a deep sigh, “to my son. Sir Horace knew me not.” She paused, and the first tear that she had shed, perhaps the last she did shed, for henceforwards her thoughts were all given to revenge—moistened her cheek. “In a few minutes he was still. I heard a movement near me, and I saw Mr. Lawson empty the phial which had held the medicine,—and there was still some left—into a basin of water.”

Lady Wentworth was here interrupted by some one pulling her sleeve. She turned round with her native *hauteur*, and looked stedfastly at Mr. Lawson as he whispered something to her.

“Did you observe that?” said Mr. Powell, in a low tone to Eustace.

“But Mr. Lawson” continued Lady Wentworth, “merely meant to taste the medicine, as he assured me. Sarah Blundell can tell you more. I conclude,” said her ladyship, rising with a proud curtesy in the midst of her grief, “I may withdraw.” She moved towards the door. “I shall be happy,” she said, turning round, ere she quitted the room, “that these affairs of a family known in the county, I may say, some six hundred years, should be as little disclosed to the vulgar tattle, as may be convenient.”

The Coroner, at this speech, muttered some words over the Bible before him, bowing as he spoke; the enlightened Jury put their hands to their foreheads, — the ancient custom of the subservient, — as they bent their heads. A murmur of compassion was heard as Lady Wentworth disappeared.

The carriage was not far off, and Lady Wentworth was handed to it by Mr. Lawson who followed her in. “My dear madam,” exclaimed Lawson, as they were driven towards Coughton, “let me give you one piece of advice. Before a Jury it is not necessary to volunteer information; but merely to answer such

questions as may be put. I regret that you make the common low people so much a party to your ladyship's griefs and uncertainties." He spoke with the idea that he still held a sovereign influence over Lady Wentworth's mind, that he was still regarded by her as the most attached, the most useful, the most confidential of friends. But the illusion was gone. "Why had Mr. Lawson allowed Sir Horace to die?" Such was the *moral* of Lady Wentworth's growing antipathy. Besides, they who were once dependants were now superiors. Mrs. Lawson was the present mistress of Coughton; at her death her son inherited the estate. Affairs were altogether in a different position.

Lady Wentworth did not look at Mr. Lawson when he thus addressed her, but sat swelling and scowling with mingled pride and anger. These two people were well-assorted—Rancour and Craft personified.

"I shall be glad when that scape-grace, Stanhope Floyer, is heard of," said Mr. Lawson, as the carriage drove into the park; "his disappearance at this time is strange," he added, as if speaking to himself.

Lady Wentworth turned round and looked stedfastly at her son-in-law. "I could curse, I could tear to pieces, any one who had a hand

in this foul deed!" she cried, in a tone of frenzy; "I would follow him to the gibbet, if he has poisoned Horace!"

She spoke as one scarcely mistress of her reason, but *she kept her word*.

"It is a most foul deed!" said Lawson; "a murderer by poison is the most deliberate, the most worthy of revenge. The nature of his guilt, the instruments of his crime, cannot be traced. His offence can only be proved by circumstances." He looked out of the window as he spoke and added, very calmly, "How disturbed the common-people are about this melancholy affair. Observe how they are even collected under that hawthorn-tree to see your ladyship; they will spoil the grass."

Lady Wentworth's face became crimson. She drew down the blind with a force that broke the cord. "It is, indeed, time that you should see to that, Mr. Lawson! I don't marvel at your observing it. Ah! dear Horace! my poor boy!—my dear Horace!—he little knows what his mother has come to!"

"Think not, my dear Lady Wentworth," cried Mr. Lawson, in his sweetest accents, "that I can ever enjoy this place, or feel myself the master of it, or look upon it as anything but the *memento* of our poor lost Horace; to me

it is even distasteful," he added, drawing down the blind on the other side, as if to shut out the view.

"Then, why did you say to Pearce, the gardener,—ay, the very evening after my poor child's death,—that the men might work at their ease, and live at their ease; it should not be as it was in Sir Horace's days:—that you wanted to be master before, and you were master now, and should be master!" exclaimed Lady Wentworth, her voice getting louder and louder, and shriller, every word she spoke, until it at last reached to a pitch which the ear could scarcely tolerate.

Mr. Lawson looked a little aghast for a moment. "May Heaven chastise me if I ever spoke such words!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could recover breath. "Your ladyship should not give credence to the false tales, and, allow me to say, inventions of malicious servants."

He could not appease that soul of pride. "—At any rate, wait till I'm out of the house, Mr. Lawson,—wait till I'm in my grave, for I shall be there soon. Then you can have all,—all your own way: poor Millicent for your slave; your worthy friend, Mr. Stanhope Floyer, for your toad-eater; and Mrs.

Stanhope Floyer, whom all the world says you're in love with, for ——”

“ My dear, dear Lady Wentworth,” replied Lawson, in his soothing accents, “ you're a little irritated. Don't let the coachman and footman see these little family differences,” he added, as he handed Lady Wentworth out of the carriage.

Meantime the inquest proceeded, and many witnesses, servants of the family, were called. What passed in that room will be hereafter disclosed. *We* live in days when the influence of the rich and powerful does not overawe the minds of men. In the last century there was still a vast deference to power, and a mighty fear of the lords of the manor, whatever they might be. The Coroner was a neighbour, and visited at Coughton; he was ignorant of all but the forms of law, — its spirit was unknown to him. Medical jurisprudence was a science not much advanced since the days of Overbury, when ignorance, the mother of suspicion, pointed to every death as mysterious and unfair. The jurymen were tenants of, or dependants upon, the Wentworths; the witnesses, and few appeared, were servants, or, what in those days were equally unserviceable to justice, medical men, dependant on the pa-

tronage of the great. Ignorance and interest combined cast strange shadows upon the face of fact; and such a medical evidence as was, perhaps, never given in our days, mystified the poor homely jurymen, who with, it may be, honest intentions, were much more competent to judge of a crop of turnips, or a field of barley, than to decide upon an embarrassing statement about extravasated blood, and ruptured vessels.

After establishing, however, the belief, that by poison alone the unhappy Sir Horace lost his life, it became an impossibility to decide by what substance death was procured; for, happily, that insidious agent, to which those who fear not eternity do now fatally and, alas! frequently resort, trusting that the trace of self-destruction may not be perceived, and forgetting that nought is secret, nought is hidden from One eye, — that awful instrument of the unrighteous, prussic acid, was then, if not unknown, known only to the few. The progress of science has pointed out its ominous merits, and men have become accustomed to talk of it as of “the arrow that flieth by night.”

Puzzled, — overawed, — as anxious to avoid giving offence as to do right, the jury were unable to come to a decision — the inquest was adjourned, and the Coroner took his dinner in

the sanded parlour : — when, but not until the shades of night covered the fair vales around Coughton, was the exhumed body of the young man carried again, and finally, to his last home : for the populace was indignant, and waited until the stars shone upon the grey tower of the church, to view the quiet and furtive entombment of their former landlord.

“ And thus,” said Mr. Powell to Eustace Floyer, as he conducted the latter to his rectory, “ the affair is settled — for the present. Have you any suspicions ? ”

“ I *have*,” returned Eustace, thoughtfully. He was leaning against the latticed-window of the rector’s parlour, looking on the churchyard, which was only divided by a sunk fence from the garden. “ And it will — it will be discovered,” resumed Eustace, earnestly : — “ perhaps not yet.” He stood for some time gazing stedfastly on the firmament. Oh ! when we are wearied of man’s ingratitude, or stung by man’s injustice, or doubtful of man’s truth, let us look upon those stars, symbols of inscrutable and inimitable truth and mercy ! What a language they speak ! — what hopes they point to ! — what a calm their silent progress diffuses into the unquiet mind !

On the following day Eustace took Adeline

from Coughton. She left it without one sigh of regret. Lady Wentworth went to her own room, where she remained; and although the black cloth was now taken down, and even visits of inquiry were admitted; and though the emblazoned hatchment over the porch of the clock tower announced that the soul of the young baronet "rested in peace," there was little peace beneath the ancient roof of that doomed old house.

Lady Ellen and Mrs. Heneage formed a relief to the mournful drama, in which the principal personages of Coughton Manor figured. Their unconsciousness and stupidity were quite refreshing to those who knew too much. Mrs. Heneage, indeed, still heard the death-watch at times, and saw a coffin at night bounce out of the huge, deep-seated grate in her bed-room; and the truth of her former predictions had given her great consequence with the housekeeper, and my Lady Wentworth's own maid; and there was a little comfortable gossip often going on between the old lady and these privileged talkers, for in those days, as there was less difference in education, so there was far greater equality of subjects in discourse between mistresses and servants.

Mr. and Mrs. Lawson had been always so

unlike, that the difference of their deportment on assuming the seigniority of the mansion excited no surprise in the servants, who always know character well. Mr. Lawson, of low birth and humble fortune, displayed, during his brief season of power, that arrogance which even the sword that hung over him by a hair, could not, such was the folly and infatuation of this clever and unprincipled man, check. He stalked about the house, *looking orders*, though he dared not give them. He was observed taking a list of the pictures, and noting down their value. "So much," thought his too well-informed wife, "for the gaming table." And he was very much among the plantations, marking trees which, as he said to the forester, "it was a shame to leave standing."

"He may just chance not to be left long himself," said old Abel Miles, who was loitering with a bill-hook in his hand, among the men as Mr. Lawson, having looked around with the air of a lord-paramount, picked his way back without soiling his pink silk stockings. "The Crowner's had up old Sally Blundell; she's sworn his life from he, folks say, but old Sally's took very bad; she's not half her time sensible."

"It's a sin," said the forester, as he fell to

his work, "to hear what folks say of the lady; that 'tis her as has done the deed; I can't abear to hear 'em talk so."

A blow of the axe stopped all rejoinder; and the wood echoed with that sylvan sound. The forester's mind was engrossed with his task; it was only old Abel that went about with his bill-hook and shears, here and there, doing next to nothing, and thinking that he did a vast deal, that continued pondering over the matter, muttering to himself and calling up the dead, and the actors of the former days to his failing recollection, to which the present was distant, and the distant present. Mysterious, but oh! how merciful the dispensation which blunts and obliterates the harassing events of passing life, and permits the aged and feeble to live their youth over again, to recal the scenes which can now no longer pain, and grants to memory its pleasures only.

That night a long conference was held in the oak-chamber, as it was called, before Mrs. Heneage's toilet, between the old lady, Lady Ellen, and a couple of abigails. There was a vast deal of whispering—and looking round—and going to one door to see that it was shut, and then to another, though Heaven knows the

walls were thick enough, and the room was far enough from any other, being at the extremity of the gallery.

“Yes, my Lady Ellen,” the senior abigail was saying, “it’s as true as true, Sir Horace walks adown the south gallery, as I’ve aheard! He don’t come nigh this way.”

“Thanks to the stars!” said Lady Ellen; “but now old Sally’s really dead, she’ll walk too!”

“Old Sally was took very much the same way as our young master, I’ve heard, only so very lingering; and my lady was with her better nor two hours. She was too weak to go before the Crowner the second day; and was obliged to take her bible oath in her bed, before Mr. Stowe, and she swear as that he bade her take them clothes away, and the bottles down; and she went and put ’em in the maids’ room; so as soon as ever Mr. Lawson found it out—”

“—God bless my soul!” exclaimed Mrs. Heneage, who was just having a high-peaked night-cap stuck on by her maid, “why it’s a case o’ murther!”

“Undoubtedly, sure, madam,” said the abigail, with an air of importance. “Says he, ‘Sally, what have you done with them things?’

says she, 'I put them here, sir.' Says he, 'I won't be gainsaid, but you'll take them down stairs.' But Lord-a-mercy! Lady Ellen, how Mrs. Floyer does take on! for it's all about as Mr. Floyer been't quite so innocent as he looks. He's the prettiest man I ever see—"

"Well, he'll come back when he's tired of travelling, I suppose," said Lady Ellen. "So you think her mourning's better made than mine, Dolly?"

"Not better, but she ha'n't your ladyship's helegant figure," said Dolly, looking connoisseur-like at the plaits and flounces of Lady Ellen's new dress.

"I think I look so old in mourning, and I fancy I don't become my new dress," said Lady Ellen, only to be interrupted with the exclamations, "Oh! it's made beautiful!—and just to fit!—and suits to a T!—and I know a young gentleman as thinks the same as I do!—" and other speeches in which the *confidentes* of the ladies of the old school were wont to indulge; and, upon which fat Lady Ellen's vanity eagerly fed.

"Lawk, ma'am, and about Sir Horace's stockings! Keziah hasn't told that. Says Mr. Lawson to old Sally, 'Take these here stockings away; they be quite wet: he's took

a cold.' Now Sally's put upon her oath, and says them stockings was quite dry. But bless your soul, ma'am, my Lady Wentworth's so inveterate fond of Mr. Lawson, she won't never believe a word of it, if you was to swear to it yourself!"

"I think more of the stockings than anything," said Keziah; "for they're the horriblest things to dry, and holds wet such a time;—it's a thing untold what a taking my lady's in about it; she'll go out of her mind as sure as my name's Keziah Lowe!"

Keziah Lowe and Dolly retired in due time to the servants' hall. The Coughton postman had just come in, and the house-steward was unlocking the letter-bag.

"Here's a strange guess sort of a hand-writing!" said one of the servants, as she took a letter directed to Lady Wentworth, and went up to her mistress's room.

Lady Wentworth was pacing up and down, like a wild-animal in its den. She was prepared for the night, her sleeping-apparel being covered by a green satin night-gown, as it was called; pray she could not. Wretched woman, her prayers would have been like those of Shimei in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, which the learned Doctor Parr, anxious

to vindicate the character of David, was wont to attribute to that enemy of the Israelite king.—No, she was recalling all the affronts of the day, which too many parties were eager to enumerate, when the letter was brought in.

She opened, read it, and stood aghast—"I! I!" she exclaimed, in a tone of genuine surprise; "this is *too* much!" She examined the paper and post-mark; she clenched her hand, she gnashed her teeth. "This is too, too much!" She folded it, and locked it in a casket on her bureau. "Now," she said, with a look that defied description, "for revenge!" She fell into a reverie—and the servant, without asking any questions, left her to repose.

From that moment Lady Wentworth flinched not from her purpose until she had fulfilled her resolution to follow the murderer of her son to the gibbet.

She sent for the chaplain to her dressing-room. In such a case as this, what a blessing would a good and plain-speaking clergyman have been! This was, indeed, a circumstance in which spiritual aid, a rational and pious minister of God, might have soothed and directed the unhappy Lady Wentworth. How many such might, in the present day, be found

— perhaps in those less thinking days. But there is no class of persons on whom the march of mind, the state of public opinion, and the important improvement in our colleges of learning, has worked so great a reformation as in our parochial clergy. They may have peculiarities of sentiment and doctrine; they may run into extremes of devotional zeal, and those extremes may be displayed in the high flights of Puseyism, or in the nether sphere of the evangelical Christian; but they are no longer, as a body, time-serving; they have not within their core that mortal disease, indifference; they are raised in the scale of society, even if they are lowered in their temporal possessions; and they dare to prefer the duties of their ministry to the service of their patrons.

Mr. Carter, the chaplain, was a specimen of his order sixty years ago. He had all his life been on the very verge of disgrace. At school of being expelled; at college of being plucked; when he applied for ordination, of being refused; when he was inducted to a small living, of being rejected by a petition from the inhabitants. Several times he had had a narrow escape of being horsewhipped; and he rarely went to bed, after any of the convivialities of Coughton, without a narrow

escape of being dead-drunk. There was only one thing which he had completely missed — contemptible, and, from his card-playing, hunting propensities, nearly penniless, he had totally escaped the danger of being poisoned — he was not worthy of the dignity of being murdered.

He now crept into the room to listen to Lady Wentworth's invectives against the Lawsons, — and — to preach peace and forgiveness to that proud, unrelenting spirit? No! To retail little chronicles of the servants' hall character — annals which belonged to the buttery and the still-room; to recount how many bottles of the best claret Mr. Lawson had called for, and how freely — this was tender ground, — Mrs. Lawson had spoken of the family diamonds. Peace? No! If there be anything which teases and irritates, it is those tiny insects which insinuate themselves into the skin at harvest-time — minute, like a microscopic point, scarcely to be discerned. Similar to these are the little circumstantial facts which, accumulated, work the mind into a fume. Each point we hear presents to the exaggerated fancy of the angry, a volume of meaning.

Mr. Carter had no particularly bad motive

in what he said, but he had long been the fetcher and carrier of domestic gossip for Lady Wentworth — the inspector-general of the household. Parents and children were not then unreserved to each other as, thank Heaven! they now are — there was but little direct communication between them. Mr. Carter had been the worthy go-between, who had formerly been wont to let her ladyship know when Millicent was discontented, and to give her a timely hint when poor Sir Horace talked — as he sometimes valorously did — of being one day independent of mamma's control.

Whilst yet Mr. Carter talked and agreed, and agreed and talked, and always contrived to let his opinion come round to that of Lady Wentworth — for subservience had become second-nature — a loud scream was heard in the hall, so loud that it shook even Lady Wentworth's nerves. In a second, it was followed by another—and another. Then there was a rush along the gallery—footsteps came nearer and nearer — there was a cry of such anguish as the person who approaching, passed onwards, that Lady Wentworth, who recognised the voice of her daughter, moved in haste towards the door.

The words "Mother, mother!—Lady Wentworth!—help, help!" burst from the lips of Millicent, who was found, when Lady Wentworth reached her in the gallery, on her knees at the door—her hands clasped—her face death-like.

Lady Wentworth was shocked as well as alarmed. Jealousy, revenge, were for the moment forgotten, and the mother for once—how short her empire!—reigned supreme over her vindictive passions.

"Millicent!—my dear child!"

"O, that is right! Call me your child—help us—protect me! Do not let them take him away"—a shriek—for whilst she spoke Millicent fancied she heard an outer-door close—followed these words.

"Take *whom* away?" asked Lady Wentworth, sternly, whilst a cold perspiration sat on her brow, and every limb trembled—
"Take *whom*, Millicent?"

"Oh, I said it was not your doing! He told me it was; he said you hated us both! I knew—I knew my mother would protect us!"

"I know not *that*," returned Lady Wentworth. She reflected for a moment. "Mrs. Lawson, rise—go into my room—go, Milli-

cent, go — why should you — why should you wait to see these scenes? Why brave, poor girl, your misfortunes?”

Millicent arose from her knees. “I can brave all,” she said, with composure and a marked determination, “that is, to save Lawson from disgrace!”

“— Even if he merits it?” asked Lady Wentworth, her eye kindling with anger. “Come, Millicent, I understand the case. It is what I have expected. Your husband is apprehended, and for the murder of my son.” She raised her voice to a high pitch as she spoke. “I knew it would be so — I knew it would be so! You have no cause to grieve, Millicent,” she added, speaking very rapidly, — “you have no cause to grieve. Think you, he has been a fond and faithful husband? — Think you he married you for anything but wealth? Go in; *I* will see to this matter. Do not interfere with it, Millicent.”

“Madam,” cried Mrs. Lawson, whose pliant nature was now all changed — her timidity gone — her disinterestedness revealed — “I beseech you, give us your protection! The Coroner, madam, has sent a warrant for my husband’s imprisonment. Yes! his men are below. I appeal to *you*, my mother! Do

not desert us! You have done the deed—it was your evidence! You can intercede for us!—Mother! protect us!”

“Never!” exclaimed Lady Wentworth, casting a look so fierce and bitter at her daughter, that even the chaplain drew near to Mrs. Lawson, and muttered the words “Poor soul!” for which, in addition to his other escapes, he had a narrow escape of being turned out. “And what do you follow me for?” asked Lady Wentworth, as she proceeded at a quick pace down the gallery, and turned round on hearing her daughter’s footsteps.

“To join my husband, madam!” was Millecent’s reply; and she continued to pursue her mother.

They walked, followed by Mr. Carter, down a wide staircase, crossed the hall, and passing through a billiard-room, entered an antiquated library. It was one of the most dismal and least-frequented rooms in the house; long and dilapidated, with a square carpet of French fabric covering the centre of the apartment, and a rough oak floor displayed beyond. The books were worm-eaten and dusty; yet here—and every one wondered—the fine gentleman, Mr. Lawson, chose to pass most of his leisure time.

He had been tying-up papers, and burning old letters, — a very necessary occupation with a man of his character, — when, with a stealthy step, accompanied by one of the men-servants, three constables entered. These were not a description of persons unknown to Mr. Lawson, and the colour fled from his face, when, looking up, he saw these determined personages standing with a warrant in their hands. He had recovered his presence of mind just as Lady Wentworth entered. Millicent had not been with her husband when the warrant was presented to him; he had desired that she might be informed. Simple, trustful, incapable of cruelty and deceit, the husband from whom she had been long estranged, though on the politest of terms, because dear to her, as when in her girlish days she had given him her heart. Passing by Lady Wentworth, she flew to Mr. Lawson, and threw her arms around his neck.

“Will they take you to prison? — *will* they take you, Lawson? — Is there *no* one that can intercede for us? — must the law have its course?”

There was a silence of some moments. Her heart-rending tones ceased, — her sobs

only were heard. Mr. Lawson was the first to speak.

“I am the victim of perjury! Sir Horace may have been poisoned,—it is possible,—it is probable. You know, my dear, his extreme carelessness in leaving arsenic, and other poisonous matters about the house,—his culpable neglect of the safety of the family in general.”

“We have a post-chaise, Mr. Lawson, at the door,” said one of the constables.

“Lady Wentworth, — mother!” screamed Millicent, “say that *you* believe him innocent, that you will protect us!”

“I have no power!”

“No, madam!” Mr. Lawson bowed as he spoke, — “nor *disposition*. Time will reveal, — many thanks, — the hand that gave the dose.”

“Wretch! slanderer!” cried Lady Wentworth, in fury; “who wrote the letter that I received to-night? — who contrived *that* falsehood?”

“It is easy, madam, to trample upon the fallen;” said Mr. Lawson, with a smile; “the ties of affection and gratitude are, I perceive, forgotten. Gentlemen, you must excuse my finishing a few important things

I have to do, whilst we thus waste our time in parleying."

"No, sir!" was the stern reply.

"There is refreshment in the servants'-hall;" said Lawson, his hands trembled as he began to tie up and seal some letters.

"No, Frederick," exclaimed his wife, wiping the tears hastily from her eyes; "if you must go,—if so horrible a crime must be tried and disproved by law,—since my mother turns against us, let us go at once! The sooner,—the sooner that all is examined the better! I will not leave you!"—she clung to him as she spoke,—“the world shall not say that your wife left you, even for an instant. Stay, our boy shall go with his father. Go, desire that he may be aroused,—order my own carriage, Roger! Let us not go like criminals,—injured,—slandered as you are!”

Lady Wentworth stepped forward,—“You go, Millicent!—you! Do you turn from your own flesh and blood?—Do you leave me, your mother, childless, to go with your brother's murderer?”

“I do leave you, madam,” replied Millicent, “though my heart may break. May I not see my mother alone for an instant with Mr. Lawson?—No!—then, as I have

nought to hide from my God, I may speak out my mind. Madam, — my mother, — my dear mother, when you lost my poor brother I did all I could to comfort you! — I grieved, — I wept for him, indeed I did! But all ties are loosened between us! I am no longer your daughter, but *his* wife. You called him my brother's murderer! Thank God, there is still justice! and truth must prevail. Farewell!"

"If you take his part, Millicent —"

"— I do, — I will!"

"The world shall judge between us!"

Lady Wentworth fixed her dark eyes on Lawson as she spoke. The trepidation of the criminal was gone — he was again the actor, — and a calm smile irradiated his countenance as he answered the look of his mother-in-law in these words: —

"I am so conscious of innocence that I fear nothing. Lady Wentworth's fury at being despoiled of her greatness and wealth I perfectly understand. Come, Millicent, stay no longer," he added, in a low voice, yet loud enough to be heard, — "where you are likely to undergo the fate of those that have gone already by sudden means; which Providence — and he raised his hands and eyes — will bring presently to light! I had

wished, as you know, to quit Coughton for a season. — I had my reasons; which will appear in a honest light, to the eternal confusion of an unnatural being. Gentlemen, I am ready, my valet has, I presume, seen to my articles of apparel. How far do we proceed to-night?"

"To Derby," was the reply.

A servant now announced that Mrs. Lawson's coach was ready. The night was very dark, but there were servants with *flambeaux* on horseback, and four swift steeds; and the departure had more the air of a triumph than a capture. Only the dark, fierce men, who were, perforce, obliged to ride in Mrs. Lawson's carriage — for she would not be separated from her husband, — intimidated the half-awakened boy, who, weeping, hid his curly locks on the knee of his mother: — with *what* feelings she clasped the treasure to her heart!

In a quarter of an hour — with little disturbance — with no farewells — they had departed. Lady Wentworth stood in the deserted library alone. Her daughter had meekly entreated her blessing, — it had been refused. Lady Wentworth was, indeed, childless, — but she had what she loved better than affection — she had revenge!

CHAPTER IX.

The look of scorn I cannot brave,
Nor pity's eye more dreary ;
A quiet sleep within the grave
Is all for which I weary.

Hogg.

DAYBREAK brought its usual aspects of peace and beauty to Coughton, — a bright sky, blue smoke from the not too distant village, — the sheep-bell and the woodman's axe, were sights and sounds of cheerfulness. But within — how desolate ! how changed !

It was noon, 'ere Adeline heard the whole truth — truth in which she was so deeply interested. Her first determination was to follow Mr. and Mrs. Lawson, to plant herself near them, — to visit them daily ; but Eustace, who had seen the magistrates, found that, at present, no communication, except with certain privileged persons, would be permitted. Months must elapse 'ere the accused would be brought to trial ; — the

law must have its course, and, probably, 'ere the trial came on, some additional witnesses might make Lawson's innocence apparent. "Especially," Eustace added, "if Stanhope returns to us; — and now, Adeline, where will you go? — let me advise you to accept the protection of Lady Theodora."

"No, take me home;" was her reply. "Take me to my father! Whom have I now but him?"

"Yet do not give up hope — do not anticipate evils."

"Do *you* hope?" was the searching reply, and the answer was too well read in the countenance of Eustace. Adeline sank back in her chair, and entreated that she might not be solicited to cheerfulness. Yet she was struck and affected by the emotion and sympathy of her companion, and, in an instant afterwards, she tried to soothe him.

"I shall recover when I reach home. I must not complain there, for my father has never seen me in real grief — and oh! how will he bear it?"

"And for the sake of your own health — for your life, Adeline —"

"Life! think you that I wish it prolonged? Others have had friends, favourites, sis-

ters—I never loved but *one* object, except my father and Loftus. And now the silence of the grave has closed over him! O that I could be sure that he was at rest! that guilt, or necessity, or conscience had not driven him from me! Once more, kind Eustace—once more—and then I shall be content,—say that you think him innocent.”

“I *do*—on my life I believe it!”

“God of mercy! I bless those words! Then we shall meet again! Yes, dear Stanhope, if not here—if not here, in Heaven! Yet you think him murdered?” She turned her wild gaze on Eustace as he spoke.

“The whole affair is wrapped in such mystery, that—but, if innocent, we know that he is under a protection more available than that which our poor wishes can give him. Adeline, let us *trust*!”

“True! oh! how *much* religion it requires to serve us in sorrow. In health and peace we talk of it; but when adversity comes—yet I will, dear Eustace, try. And I know,” she added earnestly, “for the honour of your house and name—of our name! and oh! how dear to me is that name, you will not relax in your efforts to unravel this mystery,

to probe it to the very depth. Promise me, Eustace, even if my life should not be long — and I believe, I *hope*, I am hastening to rest—you will, whilst you live, cease not to rescue my Stanhope from suspicion.”

“ I promise you, Adeline,” replied Eustace, firmly.

By night they reached Northington. Mr. Meadows, who was now very infirm, had been gradually informed of the events which had taken place at Coughton Manor — of the disappearance of Stanhope Floyer, and of the feeble and precarious state in which his beloved and once happy daughter was returning to her home. Silently, he had grieved much ; but he said little. He even considered it imprudent to talk upon business-matters, especially on affairs into which law could by any possibility put its finger. The poor old man had suffered much from disappointment. Loftus’s ingratitude had cut him to the quick, but the unfortunate marriage of his ill-fated daughter had been a perpetual and cankering care.

Adeline was now so enfeebled by sorrow, that she was supported by Eustace up the steps, and into her father’s room. He was sitting in his usual chair, and alone. She

sank at his feet. "Father!" she cried, "I am come back to you, a broken-hearted, hopeless being, but I will do all I can to comfort you, if you will take me home, and love me, as you did — for I *want* affection! Yes —" and she threw herself into the old man's arms — "it will be such a comfort to take care of you. *I* can always stay at home with you. *I* shall never wish to leave you!"

"I am blessed in the best of wives, Adeline," said Mr. Meadows, languidly; "and now I shall be very happy in your company, my love. Ah! my dear! Well it was for your dear mother's sake, and for us all, that she was released. Louisa has put her portrait up in the spare bedroom, love!" — seeing Adeline looking up at the drawing-room wall. "She was an excellent woman — a very worthy woman! So indeed is my present wife. Ah! she is now at rest! it would have broken her heart, Adeline, to have known that you, love, —" Mr. Meadows turned aside his head, and wiped a tear (the tears of solicitors should be crystalized!) from his eyes. "You must repent your marriage, now love, seeing how much better you might have done —"

"I have never repented," said Adeline,

softly. "I would, my dear father, take the risk again, for the sake of — the sake of the few brief years of our union, which —" She rose and walked hurriedly to the window.

"Come, come," cried the cheerful voice of Mrs. Meadows, "I must have no doleful scenes, it will bring the gout from the feet directly, my dear; we want to keep it there. Nothing makes me so happy as when his dear feet swell — and it's a real gala when he can't walk. So you've put on mourning for Sir Horace! Complimentary mourning, of course — very kind and polite! Dear me! talking of politeness, how vastly polite Sir Tufton Tyrawley is to your humble servant; I do like Sir Tufton — he's the true gentleman — and a gentleman is what I adore. But dearest, darling child, you must tell us all about the murder, and about poor Stanhope's making away with himself — what? you don't think it was that? Well, I'm very glad. I protest I thought it was his debts and difficulties — but suicide's a most dreadful thing! — and a man has no right to take himself out of the world, as he didn't bring himself into it: I'm sure it's beautiful to hear Sir Tufton talk about suicide."

"You're talking a good deal, Louisa,"

said Mr. Meadows, who, like many men with noisy wives, was rather ashamed of her good spirits.

“To make up for silence yesterday. Only fancy, dear—a make-peace dinner at the Loftuses! so cold and grand—the Smallwoods’ servant waiting, and I’ll vow and declare they borrowed the Smallwoods’ candlesticks, for I knew them again. But really, love (darling!—you look as beautiful as ever!) wouldn’t it be rather a relief to you to know the truth about poor Stanhope, whether or not—and how?—and where? It is so hard upon a woman, for she can’t form another connection, and I always think ’t is best to know the worst—as Sir Tufton says, ’t is quite a tragedy from beginning to end.”

“Adeline had better retire,” said Mr. Meadows, kindly.

“You don’t mean to keep up Woodcote! I suppose,” said Mrs. Meadows, following Adeline to her bed-room. “How it would amaze the Loftuses! And I confess I long for county society—what I have here is not to my taste;—and those Brooksbanks—I can’t afford to dress as Mrs. Brooksbank does;—a taffeta satin cloak with lace this wide! But dear, angel Adeline! Oh you’ll

get better, love, here! Your native air—and I'll never leave you alone, love. Think how much better your situation is than poor Mrs. Lawson's!—in prison with her husband, among felons and other low society. Their entrance into Derby was quite triumphant, I hear. They were lodged in the principal inn till the magistrates settled what apartments in the county receptacle—we won't talk of jails, love—they were to have. There was such a crowd collected about the house—and Mr. Lawson in his best suit, with a sky-blue coat and satin waistcoat—his hair dressed incomparably, and a diamond ring on his finger, bowing to the people. Oh! its impossible that he can be a murderer!”

“Has Sir Tufton seen Mr. Lawson?” asked Adeline, who was deeply, painfully interested in these details.

“He saw him on this occasion; there was his wife—poor dear Mrs. Lawson, with her favourite cherry-coloured ribands, by Lawson's side, with her boy in her hand—he had a blue sash on, I think they said—no it was pink.* But the people are convinced of Lawson's innocence. Sir Tufton—dear me! he's like myself, too feeling a heart!—said he couldn't stand to see his cousin there—

poor Millicent! — he and I shed tears together about it. So he came away, having given his sanction to the Lawsons — and really it's a great thing — a very great thing for them — even the Loftuses admit that. But of course Lawson's innocent."

"God grant he may be so!" exclaimed Adeline, looking up, and clasping her hands.

"Well, good night! my dearest — you'll be better in a few weeks, darling!"

But a few weeks did not effect the change that was expected. Time, which enables us to look calmly on the grave in which the objects of our earliest affections are entombed; — time, which reconciles the lover to separation — which heals differences, and likewise cools down the ardour of attachments, began, but by slow degrees, to bring, if not happiness, at least composure and resignation to Adeline. Many weeks passed away before she gave up the hope, which supported her day by day, of seeing the unfortunate Stanhope Floyer again. Not a single effort that money could procure was left untried, to trace his steps after he left Coughton. To every effort, Adeline looked at first with a feverish hope — by degrees her disappointment, upon the failure of those fruitless attempts, became

less poignant. By degrees, hope departed — at first its final rejection was agony — reason and bodily strength seemed scarcely able to resist the anguish of the heart. Day after day Adeline had stood watching from her bed-room window the turn of the road towards Woodcote. She scarcely ever sat in any other place than near that window. If she worked, her eyes were seldom long fixed on her employment. When she read, she raised, almost incessantly, her head to watch every leaf that fell, or every step that passed.

Mr. Meadows and the kind-hearted Louisa, and above all Mr. Floyer, saw that this daily, hourly, irritation was wearing away the delicate form which had now lost every attribute of health; yet no one liked to speak — no one liked to take away the last spring of exertion — the sole support to a shattered mind and body. One morning — many months after the events at Coughton, Mr. Powell arrived at Northington. He had heard of the state of Mrs. Stanhope Floyer; he was experienced in ministering to a mind diseased; he believed it to be the kindest office, the truest friendship to impart the despair of certainty, rather than to permit of the torture of suspense. The one he knew the mind could be recovered

from—but he had seen the other destroy many a vigorous body and strong intellect.

Adeline received the clergyman, as she did every one from Coughton, with eagerness and hope. It was long ere she could be persuaded that Mr. Powell had *not* brought her some good news—but that he was afraid of imparting it too soon. When she found that she was deceiving herself—that Mr. Powell had come with a far different intention, she sat down and wept with a sort of childish abandonment to her sorrow, that shewed how the mind had been weakened by grief.

It was a bitter task to aggravate, and not relieve that sorrow—a hard task to bruise the broken reed—to say to the sorrowing heart, ‘hope not;’ but Mr. Powell saw that it must be done; he saw that hope, like certain narcotics, soothed but to destroy—he armed himself for his duty, not with a hardness of heart, but with the truest sympathy. He exhorted Adeline to view the truth—and to bear it.—Yes! to bear it—Why? It is the will of God!

“Oh! if I but knew *how* he had died!—*where*!—if but one token of his remembrance—the manner of his doom—were granted to me, I could be resigned!”

“Can you or I enter into the counsels of the Most High? Are we to direct *how* the chastisements of God are to be dealt out to us.”

“I cannot submit! I do not wish to live,” exclaimed Adeline, covering her face with her hands. But deep contrition followed these words—“My God! have mercy on me! grant me submission. O Mr. Powell! tell me how to gain resignation, teach me to suffer.”

“There is but one counsel I would give,” replied Mr. Powell;—“in one word *employment*. Religion is the medicine for the mind—but employment acts on it, as air and exercise act on the body. Young, rich, I should think the powers which you, madam, possess, are not to be extinguished by a repining, rebellious spirit:—there are many to whom you may bring comfort.” Happily, perhaps, for Adeline, a circumstance at this time occurred which called forth her exertions. Lady Theodora was suddenly carried off by illness. Her death was a severe blow to her son.

Fortune, station, reputation failed at this time to secure even the energetic character of Eustace Floyer from depression. Men of strong minds are always the most susceptible of the domestic affections. The tie between

a mother and a son is exceeded, or should be exceeded, in tenderness, only by conjugal attachment. Eustace Floyer, unlike most men of ample means and correct lives, had formed no interests likely to end in the only natural and happy mode of life for the young and free—marriage. To the astonishment of that circle of society in which he moved, to the regret, though not surprise, of his deceased mother, to the disappointment of some, he had hitherto given no countenance to any of those schemes which busy friends are ever apt to frame for those who do not take the trouble to do so for themselves.

Eustace seemed henceforth to belong more to his relative, Adeline, than to any other individual. *They* were now the last remains of the family, connected by misfortunes, and participating nearly the same interests.

There might be seasons when, even to Adeline, the peculiarity of this situation became obvious: but her simple, unworldly way of considering every subject, and it may be added, the innate delicacy of her mind, prevented her from shrinking from an intimacy which became her only solace. Besides, she felt, she saw that her society was necessary to her kind friend and relative, who was constantly form-

ing some scheme for her happiness. A week after the last tributes were paid to Lady Theodora's memory; they were, as it was arranged, to part: Eustace was to be absent until the trial of Lawson should take place.

"Then you will consider what I have urged," he one day said to her, at the close of a long and earnest conversation. "I think, I hope, you *will* occupy Woodcote, as you ought to do. *Your* house" — he stopped, for Adeline's melancholy and thoughtful countenance arrested his words.

"I feel under such obligations to you, that if—"

"O, Adeline! Do not talk of obligations! Do not flatter me, one moment, that I have your regard—the regard, as you have said, of a sister,—and then throw me back by speaking of obligations. I am sure," he added, sitting down near Adeline; "that you will be happier at Woodcote. Your own proper home—your right sphere, where your example and influence will benefit all around you—where your goodness will have due exercise."

"Is it, as you say, indeed, due to Stanhope's memory that I should maintain the place where he—he—" Adeline faltered; of late the name of her husband had never been men-

tioned by her. The theme was one, tacitly forbidden—her heart might dwell in secret upon his image, but, since she had abandoned hope, the path of wisdom was plain—to recur to one who was now lost to her, was as painful as it was fruitless.

“It is, it is indeed,” replied Eustace, earnestly—“and there, feeling that you fulfil your duty, the memory of what you have lost will be less poignant.” He spoke in a low tone, and turned away his head. “At home,” he continued, with greater calmness, “you are not among congenial minds—the notions and habits of those with whom you reside are, Adeline, foreign to your own. Let me hope that when I return to Woodcote I may find a very Eden blooming around you—the gardens no longer entangled, the village not neglected and wretched; the old servants employed and regulated.”

“But, you are to be absent so many months? And why?” cried Adeline, earnestly.

“I believe,” returned Eustace, “that it is better for me—do not ask me why? Perhaps, perhaps, the reason may sometime occur to you—look upon me as one who is to be pitied—not wholly censured.” He turned from her, and suddenly left the room.

“Mr. Floyer,” said Adeline to Mrs. Meadows, when, a few days after this conversation, they were walking round and round the garden at Northington, “has resolved to be absent, now for some time—and, after Mr. Lawson’s fate is determined, travelling for two years.—I guess, partly the cause of his absence.”

“And so do I,” observed Louisa.

“Lady Theodora,” pursued Adeline, “often spoke to me of a lady, the daughter of Mr. Floyer’s guardian; to whom she believed her son to be attached, but I fancy any hope of an alliance has dropped through.”

“I fancy so, too,” said Mrs. Meadows with a knowing smile. “Dear, lovely, Mrs. Stanhope—are you such an innocent?—so *soft*, as the country-people call it, as not to see that white’s white, and black’s black? My love, I should have found it out in half an hour. I can see what I can see! My darling, how can you be so blind?”

CHAPTER XII.

Guilt follows guilt, and where the train
Begins with wrongs of such a stain,
What horrors form the rear !

AKENSIDE'S *Ode to Suspicion.*

OLD people can still faintly recollect the extraordinary excitement and curiosity which was displayed concerning the supposed murder of Sir Horace Wentworth by his brother-in-law,—a subject which served the county in which it took place for conversation years after the melancholy old house in which the deed was said to have been perpetrated was levelled to the ground, and even after the family itself had become extinct, and the lands of Coughton had passed into a branch slightly connected merely with the once honourable house of Wentworth. Old people remember, with a certain pleasure, stirring events and scenes of their youth of any kind ; and the

trial of Lawson was a theme on which conjecture was not, and is not now, set at rest. For the coroner's jury who issued a verdict of wilful murder against Frederick Lawson were, on the inquest, long divided in opinion. The indictment which was preferred against him charged Lawson with having poisoned his brother-in-law with arsenic; whereas his guilty deed stands recorded as the first instance in this country of the fatal and murderous use of that now familiar agent, prussic acid. From the provincial sphere in which the crime was perpetrated, to the fashionable circles which Lawson had frequented in the metropolis, — to "the camp, the court, the city, and the grove," the interest which all classes might naturally feel in a deed so novel and so mysterious, breaking on the sanctity of relationship, destroying the safety of private life, and causing brother to look on brother with suspicion, was strongly fomented by the extraordinary and decided part which Lady Wentworth took in the affair. From the moment that Lawson left Coughton until the instant that his soul was rendered unto his Maker, Lady Wentworth pursued the prosecution of his crime more like a fiend than a mother, — more as one who seeks to avenge herself upon an an-

cient hereditary foe, than upon the husband of her daughter, and the father of her grandchild. Hence, unhappily for the cause of justice, two parties were created in the neighbourhood by this unnatural violence, — one for Lawson, one for Lady Wentworth; and it is to this day believed by many, that the proud, implacable woman hunted to the death an innocent victim. Nay, it was then, — it has been even lately, surmised that avarice had impelled the *mother* to the deed: — a surmise so calumnious and absurd, that, had it not been for the savage fury displayed by Lady Wentworth, it would never have been credited even for an instant.

Never was any prisoner treated with so many indulgences as the unfortunate Mr. Lawson; never was any scene so ably sustained, — any part so well acted, as that which he maintained during the weary weeks which he passed in prison. Noblemen, officers high in rank, sheriffs, clergymen, and physicians, formed a daily *levée* in the criminal's room, the parlour of the jailer's wife being especially given up for his use. He received the noblemen with the grace of a courtier; he had the suavity and knowledge of a man of the world to entertain the officers; every clergyman left the

culprit charmed with his penitence for small offences, and satisfied of his unconsciousness of great ones. He mystified the physician, whose dangerous knowledge he pretended not to understand; and he turned off the conversation with such address from what they meant to say, that most left him convinced that they had got out all they could, and that that all was — nothing.

Then the ladies:—the ladies were mad about the “elegant and amiable” felon. They sent him nosegays and sermons, and requested a lock of his hair. They were happy for a week if they could shake his hand; and the compliments which the handsome Lawson paid were handed down from grandmothers to their grand-daughters. Before a week was over the jailer’s wife had fallen in love with the gentlemanly sinner, and declared that she should wear mourning for his sake. There was a kind of vague idea in the minds of many, that so refined a person might possibly be guilty of so very great a crime; but at any rate it was not “a low offence,” as Sir Tuf-ton observed. “He had poisoned a Baronet: there was a wide difference between that and blowing a common fellow’s brains out.” In fact, the deed immortalized Mr. Lawson; the

sympathies of every cow-herd and milk-girl round Coughton were enlisted in his service: the lips of beauty sounded his name, and pronounced him to be very wicked, and very fascinating. He began to be termed the "unfortunate Mr. Lawson," — a dangerous term: it is better to call things by their right names.

Then the conduct of this unfortunate gentleman was so regular, pious, bountiful, and domestic, that (and one could not grudge the deception) his own poor wife was deceived. It was not only that he asserted, — he acted innocence. Sometimes, indeed, in their small chamber, Millicent, worn with anxiety, which had driven the bloom from her cheeks, and taken the flesh from her limbs, would wake suddenly, and see Lawson pacing even that narrow confine, as if the spirit could not rest. But he was always composed when she spoke to him, — always assured her that he felt no anxiety for the future; — "it was merely want of air," he added, in a plaintive tone; and Millicent sank down to cry herself to sleep.

One morning, — it was after the long winter of 1789, and not long before the assizes, which took place on the 30th of March, closed the sad scene — Mrs. Lawson, sitting in the jailer's parlour, with her boy on her knee,

teaching him his prayers, (alas! poor child!) was greeted by Sir Tufton Tyrawley. There is good, and a certain use, in all organic substances, so; also, there is good, we may believe, in all hearts; the "furnace of affliction" brings it out. Sir Tufton, a very turkey-cock in pride, had been expected to fly from his poor cousin in her extremity. Those who looked for such conduct were deceived: he was more assiduous, more respectful, more zealous in her behalf than he had ever been known to be before.

"I am *so* glad you are come, Sir Tufton. Lawson is busy with the lawyers, and their solemn faces have made me *so* dismal. Ah! cousin Tufton, these are not like the days when I came out dancing 'Money Musk' with you at the Ardham assembly!" Millicent tried to laugh, but her tears fell upon the golden tresses of her fair boy. "Come, cousin, some news," she resumed, — "anything to pass the time, and to tell Lawson when he's dull. How is Lady Ellen? — has she smiled upon your attentions yet? Ah, Tufton! How well Lady Ellen Tyrawley will sound."

"Upon my life!" said Sir Tufton, pulling out his shirt-frill, "the world does me great honour in that report, — very great honour! —

only it doesn't happen to be the case; that's all!"

"Old predilections stand in the way, perhaps?" said Millicent. "Never pretend to say you were not in love with Adeline Floyer. Poor Adeline!—how is she?—I thought when Eustace brought her here she looked ill. What a misery has our acquaintance been to *her*!"

"You are low-spirited, to-day, Millicent," said Sir Tufton, kindly. "I have some Northington news that will amuse you. Woodcote is occupied again. Mrs. Floyer has gone to live there, and I am told the place already thrives under her care."

"Long, long may she be happy! No news of Stanhope?"

"Not in the least. He was traced as far as Derby; you have heard that. No, we shall never hear anything of *him* again."

"It will always rest on my mind that *he* prepared the draught; and I know 'tis Lawson's opinion," said Millicent.

"Unluckily, you see," said Sir Tufton, evasively, "we have no proof that he did."

"What a wonderful tendency in woman's mind," thought the baronet to himself, "to turn off the misdeeds of their own husbands upon those of others!"

“ — Stanhope injured himself by a low marriage,” he resumed, seeing that after a vain attempt to rouse herself, the once joyous Millicent was lost in thought.

“ So mamma thought, but *I* never thought so ; I never considered there could be any difference between Adeline and me, except that she was so much superior to me in all things ; we are only alike in our misfortunes. Sir Tufton,” she added, after a silence of some moments, — “ how is my mother ? ”

“ By-the-bye, Millicent, that is a subject on which I am about to speak ; I came charged with a mission, — another, — a last request from Lady Wentworth. Again she entreats you, — she trusts, with better success than before, — to return to Coughton, not to expose yourself and your son to the disgrace which this unhappy business has brought upon us all.”

“ It has brought *no* disgrace,” replied Millicent firmly, “ because Lawson is *innocent*. My dutiful remembrance, cousin, to my mother ; I send to her message the same answer as before. If my husband’s life is sworn away, — if we must part,” — she set the child down on the floor, — “ go, run darling, to that window, and look out. My poor boy” —

the mother followed him with her eyes, — “need not know *all*. If we must part, it will be my mother’s doing; and she and I meet no more! I have begged, — I have entreated to see her here; to let her witnesses be confronted with Mr. Lawson, — to hear his asseverations of innocence. Ah! who can hear them, and not be convinced! But my mother refuses to visit her daughter in prison!”

“Well, well!” said Sir Tufton, soothingly, “time will show; and he good-naturedly told Mrs. Lawson how strongly the lower classes were interested in her husband’s fate; what an impressjon he had made on the lawyers, and how thoroughly he was thought to be the gentleman! (his conduct does not shew blood, though, thought Sir Tufton.)”

“— When the trial is over, and my husband triumphantly acquitted,” resumed Millicent, “we shall return to Coughton, — not by night — no! in broad daylight; I have prepared our favours, Sir Tufton!”

“True! very good! — all — all in good time. In case anything unfortunate should happen, remember Tufton Court: *I* must be a father to your boy, Millicent, — if —”

“Oh, do not talk of ifs, cousin Tufton;

I feel perfectly composed upon the subject. The greatest happiness I shall have when all is over, is to go to mamma and say, let all be forgotten! Hark! — what bell is that? — Hist! what a slow, dull toll!”

“’Tis only prayers, I dare say, at St. Abb’s,” said Sir Tufton, changing colour.— (“A miserable forger, condemned yesterday”) he muttered to himself,—“this is education!”

Sir Tufton stood by the child at the window, which overlooked a court-yard. Presently Mrs. Lawson joined them.

“’Tis a sad sight, my poor boy,” she remarked, patting the head of her child, happily unconscious that he looked on felons at their melancholy recreations;—dark, dirty visages, on which the marks of crime were visible; sullen eyes glared from time to time up at the jailer’s window, where, in lieu of watchful power, stood the mother and the child — virtue and innocence.

“They are standing still! — they are looking up somewhere! — that bell has ceased! — I know, I know something has happened! I am sick, — faint,” cried Millicent, suddenly. “Yet, what of that? — people must be hung — that has nothing to do with us? Has it, cousin Tufton?”

“Nothing in life! Come, let us sit here, and have a little talk about — about what? some of our Ardham people; — there’s Miss Stowe has married young Tickel, of the Roebuck, — that ’s the last thing — (don’t look at the window, my dear!) — just like the Stowes, so extremely low as they are; — an elopement, of course, — the young lady’s own maid gave her away, — the head-waiter at the Roebuck was father. There really ought to be an act of Parliament to prevent people from making fools of themselves.”

— On the following morning Sir Tufton called again. “I have news for you this morning,” he said, “Stanhope Floyer has been heard of! —”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Mrs. Lawson, — “now, — now Lawson will be justified!”

“No! Floyer can give no account of himself. News of his death have arrived. He was known to enter a vessel sailing to Jersey; that packet was lost, every soul perished!”

“Merciful Providence! all that could save us has died with him! And Adeline, how is she?”

“Better, — since there has been a certainty of his fate. At first she was stunned by the blow, but she is now calm.”

“Well, dear cousin,” said Mrs. Lawson, with a deep sigh, “we must now rest on ourselves, and our good cause. One of the most celebrated surgeons in London has been sent for to give his evidence on *our* side; all is prepared, and you will not desert us if we *should* be unfortunate, Sir Tufton?”

Sir Tufton even with tears in his eyes, declared he would remain with his relative until she was happily settled again in her own home. Then he turned the conversation to lighter matters, and succeeded — for good-nature generally does succeed — in diverting Millicent’s thoughts from her condition; and soon the merry laugh was heard in the jailer’s parlour; even voices were upraised to sing; and something like an attempt of Sir Tufton’s at a *second* was heard, even in the gloomy court below.

It was at a very early hour on the morning of the 30th of March, 1780, when a coach and six horses, richly-caparisoned, with servants and out-riders in state liveries, drove round to the hall-door of Coughton Manor. The escutcheon hung over that ancient portal, and the servants were still in sable suits. Wherefore all this pomp and circumstance? It is the day before that on which Mr. Law-

son's trial is to come on, and Lady Wentworth is going to attend the court.

A group of villagers had congregated under the old hawthorn tree, beyond the iron fence which enclosed the pleasure-ground; — for Lady Wentworth was coming forth to proceed to Derby. The sentiments of the peasantry around Coughton were all favourable to Lady Wentworth, — she was among her own people; and by them her haughty, fearless character was better understood and estimated than the varnished qualities of Mr. Lawson. As she walked to her coach, racked by mental and bodily suffering, aged by ten years since the death of her son, yet now kept up by an unnatural excitement, people wondered that she had no female friend to support her in the trying scene, — that she was accompanied only by the chaplain. They knew not the hard, masculine, indomitable character of Lady Wentworth's mind. It is a fearful nature that is independent of sympathy.

Lady Wentworth had never quitted her house since Mrs. Lawson had left it; she now stopped, and looking up at the hatchment, her brow assumed a still more scowling aspect. “Brute! viper! villain!” words

to which her tongue was but too well accustomed, were uttered with more than usual vehemence. Having returned the salutations of her domestics, she drove towards the park-lodge. Old Abel, in his best scarlet waistcoat, with long knee-bows, and shoeties, was just mounting, with several other tenants, into her ladyship's covered waggon; for their evidence to many matters connected with the Wentworth family might be required. There was not only a great deal of amusement, but a great deal of importance, in being witnesses; and old Abel's face looked clean and merry, his faded eyes glistened with anticipated pleasures. A day or two at Derby, the metropolis of his native region, good cheer at some favourite alehouse, and much news to come home with to his own fireside, were pleasant anticipations. Little did he think of the close of the scene; little recked he whether it were to end with a tragedy or a triumph. How could the poor old man, of feeble capacity, be expected to feel at the assizes, when in those days counsel, attorneys, and witnesses danced together at the assize ball, and the judges dined in state at the court-house?

A little knot of women and children stood

looking after Abel and his companions, as the waggon passed slowly down the village; but, presently, a fresh sight greeted them — Mr. Jones, the steward, rattling down the lane in a “neat” post-chaise; a bevy of farmers on horseback, tenants well mounted, and all in their Sunday attire, next responded to the curtseys of some, and the smiles of others; lastly, in regal pomp, Lady Wentworth’s state coach was seen, with six black and long-tailed horses, and two outriders; these were provided with horns for the narrow roads, to prevent their rudely encountering other carriages, and, like the postilions, wore jockey-caps and buckskins.

Lady Wentworth returned severally, though haughtily, the respectful bows and curtseys of the villagers. They were no longer *her* people, and that recollection goaded her to the quick; and its sting might be detected in the dark scowl and sudden flush upon her face. “I am of no consequence here now,” was her secret reflection.

Her carriage now approached the churchyard. One would have supposed that the mother’s heart might have been softened — that vengeance might for a time have given way to grief as she looked out upon the old

ivy-clad tower, with its shining fanes, and as her eye glanced towards the stately tomb under which her son slept with his fathers. And her heart throbbed, and her colour changed as she gazed upon that silent mausoleum, and a sudden thrill of anguish made her wish herself there too. But pride and vengeance checked all that was soft or kind in her nature. Her enmities were not to be extinguished in the grave. "The Lawsons must be buried there, also; it is their vault now;" and she said aloud to the chaplain, "Mr. Carter, when I die, I wish my bones to be carried to my father's place at Danby — you will see to that."

And now the carriage had fairly left the village; yet the postilions slackened their speed, and drew up gradually before a line of almshouses, on the centre of which a stone tablet with an inscription informed the passenger that "Dame Magdalen Wentworth, in the year 1672, built and endowed these almshouses for eight old women." There was before each of these lowly neat tenements, a garden, in which, in summer, the sweet pea and the rose enhanced the notions of comfort and peace which such relics of old catholic charity convey to the mind. No cottage in

Coughton boasted taller hollyhocks, nor finer Michaelmas daisies in the autumn than Dame Magdalen's almshouses; and even now, at this early season, well cared-for stocks, and rich polyanthuses might excite the envy of more scientific but less successful gardeners.

An aged woman, in a linsey-wolsey gown and blue apron, with her grey hair rolled back, or "clubbed," as it was called, under her cap, was standing at one of the wicket-gates which opened on the causeway, when Lady Wentworth alighted from her carriage.

"It is scarce ten o'clock, I see," said Lady Wentworth, glancing at a sun-dial plate upon the low stone wall; "I hope I am in time to see her. She is still alive?"

"Bless your ladyship, only just—and she don't know nobody."

"Very well; this gentleman, my chaplain, will speak to her. Perhaps, to him she will explain herself," replied Lady Wentworth, walking, as she spoke, along a narrow path flagged with red stones, into the almshouse near which the old woman stood, and, without knocking, she opened an inner door, and stood by the bed-side of a dying woman.

The sufferer was gasping, throwing her arms about, and her head from side to side,

and her eyes were heavy, as if for sleep. Yes! it was sleep that the weary wretch wanted—sleep—rest from bodily pain—perchance from mental torture. This was Sarah Blundell, the servant who happened to be in attendance in Sir Horace Wentworth's chamber, not at the moment of the baronet's death, but soon afterwards. It was she who had removed the bottles and cloths from the room at Lawson's bidding; and, as she had not always borne an irreproachable character, it had been rumoured that she was an accomplice of Lawson in the deed. Be that as it may, her depositions had been snatched from her at the intervals of a sickness which had seized her in somewhat the same manner as that in which Sir Horace had been attacked. She was too ill to appear before the coroner; fruitless attempts had been made, from time to time, to induce her to confess; every one thought she had "something on her mind"—that "something" was never revealed, but went with her to the dismal, fearful grave.

Lady Wentworth had not seen this woman during her illness. She had been long in the service of the family, and as she bent over her, the face, altered as it was, recalled the early days of married life—the dearer ma-

ternal joys to the memory of Lady Wentworth; but there was no time to dwell on *that*. She yearned to accomplish what she wished — to draw out a proof of Lawson's guilt — to drag from the bosom of his dying accomplice — for so she guessed her to be — the certainty of his intentions.

No! — it is too late! The chaplain may preach — Lady Wentworth may entreat — may threaten: God calls the erring woman hence. A faint endeavour at reply, for she was still sensible, served only to expedite the close of sense and the extinction of power. As they spoke to her, indeed, the woman's frame seemed to writhe with strong emotion. She raised her hand, and pointed to something opposite to her. All looked intently on the object — which recollection had supplied — not sight. It was a broken phial — that was all. It might mean much — it might be chance; for the eye of the dying one had now ceased to wander — her heaving chest to move the bed-clothes.

“She is gone!” said Lady Wentworth, turning away; “we have lost time.” And 'ere the spirit had quite passed away, Lady Wentworth was again seated in her carriage. Not a lingering look of enquiry nor of commiseration

did Lady Wentworth waste upon the dead. Her thoughts were all centred in this world; she lived as one who was never to die — to whom the present was all-in-all.

Meantime, Derby, the day before the assizes, was in one general ferment. Post-chaises rattled across the market-place, and large blue bags tumbled out before the doors. Grim visages, long and care-worn, were seen looking over the green blinds of the lodging-houses, where, perhaps, a prim quaker had calmly stood, like a figure cut out of paper, heretofore.

The Sheriff was coming in at a full trot when Lady Wentworth passed All Saints' church, and the ringing of all the bells in the town proclaimed the arrival of the Judges. Nun's green was filled with gay parties walking about, and the universal theme of every tongue was the murder of Sir Horace Wentworth.

Lady Wentworth's carriage and outriders produced the same effect on the gaping townspeople as if there had been a funeral passing before their eyes. It stopped before the entrance to the King's Head Inn, and her ladyship was thence conducted to apartments which had been prepared for her reception.

She was in the same town with her daughter

— with her grandchild — the only two beings that belonged to her. Did not her heart yearn towards them? No! — it beat only with pleasure when her ladyship's solicitors assured her "that there was a strong case against Lawson."

What a variety of character — what a contrast of feelings are displayed on the eve of an assize! — that event of Norman designation. Here a group of witnesses were alighting from the top of a London coach; within, are four grave gentlemen of anatomical proficiency, who are coming from the great metropolis to decide the question—died he by natural causes or not? There, smart attorneys choke up the causeway. How coolly the bilious-looking serjeant, who is making his way over to the King's Head, returns the salutations of his patrons, whose briefs he covets, and whose civilities it is scarcely etiquette to return!

Here the clerk of the arraigns—a personage little inferior in self-importance to the judge, pushes along, in his frosted curls—the antique wig of Charles II. and of his courtiers. It is, indeed, singular to see this remnant of Jeffreys and Somers — this reminiscence of Louis XIV. towering about the black poke

bonnets of market-women, and asserting its pre-eminence over its half-brothers, the peruke and the bob-wig. The genealogy and merits of wigs constitute an unexplored subject.

It is a gala night! The shops are kept open an hour longer. The theatre, with "King Lear" and the "Recruiting Serjeant," is open—the play "bespoken by the Mayor and Corporation." The Judges and Sheriffs are dining together, drinking "Church and State!" no doubt—and a very good toast. There is a vast deal of politics talked; all are of one mind; hearty, and—as long as Pitt's ministry lasts—incorruptible tories. But, take it all in all, the Judges' table is dull; there is infinitely more merriment at the barristers, and a great deal more dignity at the barristers' clerks'. Yet those were not days in which men put off their jokes and frolics when they put off the black gown and put on the red. Although decorum and suavity had, in some measure, been fashionable on the bench since the reign of Anne, before that reign, the bench, and even the woolsack, were often disgraced with language that would better have become the stocks. The judges during the latter part of the eighteenth century still partook of the general character

of the times; they were hearty, three-bottle gentlemen, fond of port and full of prejudice, who condemned a little oftener in the course of one circuit — but that was not their fault — than our mighty men of law now do in the course of a year.

In one room of the King's Head Inn Lady Wentworth and her lawyer are in close confabulations — the chaplain has fallen asleep in the corner of the *sofette*. Will Lady Wentworth sleep that night? Not if demoniac passions, thirst almost for blood, and anxiety for the event of the next day can keep her awake.

In another room are Mr. Meadows, Mr. Gadsden, Mrs. Meadows, and Mr. Loftus Meadows, who have taken the inside of the coach to come over together to Derby Assizes. An armistice had been proclaimed between Mr. Loftus and his step-mother — an armistice which the youth of aquiline features and Roman principles continually broke by contradicting his mother-in-law — only, whenever she spoke, turning his back upon her — only, whenever he could, and when neither of these polite modes of conduct were practicable, assuming a countenance of ineffable contempt the whole time she was in the room.

Then there was Mr. Gadsden, in a spenser, new from Wolstone; beneath, shorts with drab gaiters. Never were such shoes seen for brightness, I believe — he gave no one his receipt for blacking. It was commonly thought he made it himself. He had had his hair cut; most gentlemen are very fond of this operation. When they feel that they appear a little *passé*, they fancy that it is because their hair has not been cut lately. When they perceive that younger *beaux* look smarter than themselves, they resolve to go off to some Truefit—and where are there not Truefits?—on the morrow. It is the first mark of the boy's discretion when he chooses his own time to have his hair cut—the last remnant of his youth when he has still some to cut.

Mr. Gadsden was becoming a little bald on the top of his head; he attributed it all to the distress of mind different ladies had caused him—and he wore an artificial lock or two of hair on the top of his head, not liking to prove old before his time, fastened by a narrow black riband. This gave him some anxiety. There is a perversity in artificial hair, it so often adopts a rotatory motion. It excited the sympathies of a lady

with whom Mr. Gadsden had exchanged places, from the top of the coach to the inside. He had lost a nice silk umbrella (the extreme degradation of cotton ones had not then come into use), but he had, upon half-an-hour's painful regrets, and salutary reflections on the subject, recovered that affliction.

The lady for whom he had made this sacrifice was thin and pretty, with a ready capacity for the subject of marriage. She had just had a disappointment, as she confessed. The gentleman had wished her to wait seven years longer; and as she had already waited two years, she broke off an engagement which only the Rosicrucians could have thought reasonable. She was very genteel, and had travelled on the outside of the coach only to see the country; not feeling, either, very well inside. Her father was a gentleman farmer—she laid a great stress on the word *gentleman*—and she hardly knew the shape of a cheese, nor the voice of a pig, but did embroidery and played the piano-forte.

This was very interesting — but Mr. Gadsden was grown prudent, and resolved not to let himself be entangled this time. But he felt low — he had never been at an assize

before, and he had been talking a great deal of the condemned sermon to a clergyman on the coach. Miss Darnford's laugh roused him from a pensive cast of thought, in which his umbrella had a share, and Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, whom he admired as a widow even more than he had done as a single lady, had the other portion. When it began to rain, his umbrella was uppermost—when it cleared, Mrs. Stanhope Floyer won the day. Sometimes, the thought engrossed the curate's mind—"who had that umbrella now?" Next, how Mrs. Stanhope Floyer would encounter her friend Mrs. Lawson, in the prison, that evening.

In that dreary abode of crime, how fared Mr. Lawson that night? Did he, as he looked upon his wife, experience the bitterest of all mental pangs, remorse, when he observed the dire change which months of distress and confinement had caused in her? For she had been accustomed to every indulgence and refinement; never inured to privation, nor acquainted by experience with the reverses of life.

Millicent sat at the table, as their humble supper, roughly, though kindly served, was brought in. She had borne the humiliations

and restraints of the last six months with the magnanimity of a mind far stronger than she had been supposed to possess. She had never once expressed a wish to be free: if she stood sometimes gazing, with her boy, wistfully, on a morsel of green foliage which she could just see from her prison-window, she had never *said* that her heart yearned for the verdant slopes of Coughton, or that she found the present, as it often was—in-supportable. On the contrary, she had firmly resisted every command of her mother, every inducement of yet kinder friends, to tempt her from her duty—her last duty to Lawson.

Day by day, one vestige or another of former elegance—one attribute of health—the habits of personal neatness, which require the stimulus of happiness to keep them up in minds not very energetic—had vanished. Drooping, sickly—almost slovenly—at least indifferent to appearances, Millicent assimilated in exterior too well with the scene around her.

Hitherto, she had maintained her cheerfulness; but now, the effort was useless—exertion was at an end. She had been in tears all day; and even her boy's unconsciousness had failed to divert her from her sorrow.

How could Lawson look upon the mother and the child, as, with an air of dread despair, she laid the boy on a little bed near her, and bade him, in a tone of anguish, "if he loved her—to sleep," without the keenest self-reproach. Once he *was* moved; he took his wife's hand, and said:

"You will not weep to-morrow,—we shall, by this time, be on our way to Coughton."

"I hope so," said Millicent. "I can bear no more—if we are not, I must just lay me down there, and die."

Lawson pushed the untasted glass of wine from him: he wished to keep his head clear for his defence. "Lady Wentworth is arrived," he said, calmly; "perhaps you wish to see her?"

"Never! If I survive my mother, should she be ill I will slave night and day to give her comfort. But she has been a cruel persecutor of the innocent. "I wish for no communication."

"Oh!" said Lawson, carelessly, "all things will be set to rights and put under a new aspect, after to-morrow—and we must forgive and forget."

At this moment, Mrs. Stanhope Floyer was, by the intercession of one of the Sheriffs, in-

troduced into the room. She came in, gently, composedly — but her mourning-dress — her look of silent suffering might have served as a reproach to Lawson, had he been capable of remorse.

She offered no upbraiding — her own sorrows were laid aside; and the being who had lately been borne down by afflictions, rose into an energetic and consoling friend.

There *were* misgivings on her mind — yet it is so difficult, it is impossible when we are or have been in habits of frequent communion with people accused, to imagine that there can be guilt attached to them. Guilt, at a distance, has strongly-marked features — we cannot trace them *near*. We look in vain for the indications of treachery and cruelty which we attribute. When absent from the prisoner, Adeline believed, almost, in his guilt: whilst she was with him she wondered at her previous credulity.

In a few minutes, Millicent revived, and the influence of kindness on *the kind* was visible. None can truly understand sympathy but those who are ready to bestow it. “I ought, I am sure,” said Mrs. Lawson, “to bear up bravely — you, and my cousin Sir Tuf-ton have been, indeed, like relations — and

Mr. Eustace Floyer — ah! I cannot tell you how many acts of courtesy and of generosity we have experienced at his hands — so much concern for us makes me weep — lest — lest — ”

Millicent laid her head on her friend's shoulder and wept. The jailer now came to hasten Adeline away. She bade Millicent farewell. She extended her hand to Mr. Lawson.

“ I am not sure,” he remarked, with somewhat of bitterness in his manner — “ that Mrs. Stanhope Floyer and I *do* part as friends. She is, I am told, one of the evidence against me.”

“ Against you?” exclaimed Adeline, surprised. “ I know so little — nor am I to be called up, unless — ”

“ Unless the prosecution languishes,” said Mr. Lawson. He looked intently at her — and his clear brow absolutely scowled — Alas! he had but too much reason to fear her evidence. “ No matter! madam — nothing can injure the cause of an innocent man.” Mr. Lawson took up a testament, and as Adeline left the room, he appeared to be wholly occupied with its contents.

She went home to the inn where lady

Theodora and Mr. Floyer awaited her, perplexed, as well as dejected. Must she speak all the truth? Must she relate the circumstance of the laurel-leaves and the still? Was there no reservation possible, or consistent with conscience?"

She entered her own room — and kneeling down, prayed to be assisted by the Spirit of grace — that heavenly and only true guide.

CHAPTER XI.

Well, of all my disguises yet, now am I most like myself, being in my serjeant's gown. A man of my profession never counterfeits till he lays hold upon a debtor, and says he 'rests him, for then he brings him to all manner of unrest.

Every Man in his Humour.

“I SEE,” said Mrs. Meadows, looking out of the window, on the ensuing morning, “that Lady Wentworth's carriage has driven off. She means to sit through the whole trial—our landlady tells me, the great lawyer, Mr. Serjeant something or other, told her ladyship it would scarce be decorous. She gave him such a look! the old tiger, as if Lady Wentworth could possibly do anything wrong!”

“Bless my soul! there's Mr. Gadsden crossing the street! what charming legs he has! See, Mr. M——, he's stopping at that green door, with the geraniums in the window—So, I thought as much! Miss Darnford has his

arm. But, hark ! dearest,—I hear the Sheriff's trumpets—I see the javelin-men, haste ! haste ! Where's my scarf, Betty ?—take care of the step, Mr. M——, take care of the step ; my smelling-bottle, Betty, for I'm sure to faint ! We're to sit in the grand jury gallery, Betty, and if that is known throughout the house—no harm done. I'm sure the extreme politeness everybody shows us, 'tis impossible to conceive ! Don't let us forget your drops, dear !”

Mr. Gadsden, meantime, escorting Miss Darnford, wondered, in unison with her, who was the happy person who had his umbrella that day. It was mystery, whether a very civil-looking gentleman who had almost proposed to Miss Darnford had not carried it away with him by a slight mistake. “It must have been a mistake, as that gentleman had no umbrella with him,” Miss Darnford remarked, with a sweet simplicity. The more experienced Gadsden shook his head.

Then they stopped now and then to look at the shops, for Miss Darnford's home was like Noah's Ark, in point of seclusion ; and she really felt quite a Goth.

“Not in the least—not in the least, Miss Darnford,” was the curate's reply ; “I am an admirer of simplicity, and detest furbelows and flounces.”

“But bless my stars, what a crowd at the county hall!” cried Miss Darnford. “However shall I venture to go right into it. ’Tis your politeness, Mr. Gadsden, makes you think it no trouble! Goodness gracious me, if I should be carried out in hysterics!”

“There’s no chance of your being carried out, when you once get in,” said Mr. Gadsden with an absent air, for his eye rested on a nice new umbrella, exactly like his own.

“But there’s such a rabble,” he whispered, presently; “I don’t think your papa will thank me for taking you into—but my friend, the under-sheriff—”

He was stopped by the shrieks of women struggling in the hall, which opened into the court where the trial was to be held. There was a frightful crush in the place, people, to whom it was physically and utterly impossible to see the proceedings within the court, were contending for an inch of ground which could not possibly be of any use to them. There were lawyers, doctors, countrymen, constables; all vociferous enough, but nothing—not like a drop of water to the ocean, to be compared in audacity, in the gift of tongues, and in the gift of screams to the women.

Then there were the people who could not

be said to "keep the peace," for there was none to keep—calling out, "make way for Mr. Serjeant Newnham," "Mr. Serjeant Morton wants to pass," and stately gentlemen with wigs and black gowns walked daintily through the crowds, the common-people falling back with much reverence.

Mr. Gadsden and Miss Darnford edged their way in with much circumspection and patience; Mr. Gadsden congratulating himself that he had left his watch at home, and Miss Darnford being glad that "for once he was prudent." By degrees, and with the aid of several attorneys' clerks whom Miss Darnford captivated, they advanced to the open part where the hall and the court join, and listened with laudable patience to the proceedings of the court.

The Judge was expatiating in sonorous tone upon the small amount of offences in the calendar, referring nevertheless, with a grave emphasis, to the increase of the crime of sheep-stealing and shop-lifting, when suddenly his voice was lowered, his countenance assumed a solemn aspect, and he alluded, in marked and forcible expressions, to the awful offence which that assize had now to deal with; "he trusted," and he again addressed himself to

the grand jury,—“with the utmost deliberation and the most conscientious judgment.”

He ceased—and the clerk of the arraigns went through the usual forms. By this time Mr. Gadsden and Miss Darnford had found safety in a comfortable corner, under the auspices of a friend of Miss Darnford's family. They had come in, as at the end of the first act of a play, to a scene in which the audience were already initiated. There are few things so striking as an English court of justice; no theatrical display (pardon the comparison, O ye Lawyers!) can ever produce an effect upon the mind anything to be compared to it. For these are the real actors in the great drama of life; the comedy is genuine—the tragedy is true: and, like the plays of Shakspeare, there is a mixture of tragedy and comedy.

From the floor, where barristers' wigs shed their powder over the black gowns of their neighbours, to the ceiling, every inch of room was occupied; the grand-jury gallery was filled with ladies. The judge was like an antique picture set in a frame of angels. The sheriff's wand was perpetually touching Mrs. Meadows' ribbons, to restrain her natural fluency of speech, and there was a solemn silence through-

out, like the stillness before a storm, which was far more impressive than words. One place only was vacant—the prisoners' dock.

But the principal actor in the memorable scene, this idol of the fair ladies of Derby, the descendants of those already signalized by the compliments of Charles Edward, in the year 1745; was scarcely missed. All eyes were turned on one spot in the court, on one haughty, gloomy, anxious face, and the whisper, "Look—oh! look at Lady Wentworth!" ran through the court.

Her eyes were fixed on the door where Lawson was to enter: she never took them from that place. She seemed to see no one in the court—to hear nothing. Her face never relaxed from its rigid, watchful, expression—pale, lividly pale, her countenance betrayed no change, once only she was seen to smile—but I must not anticipate.

"Even this morning—this very morning," said Mr. Powell to Eustace Floyer; "her daughter, whom she had not seen for months, went to her ladyship at the inn, threw herself at her mother's knees, and entreated that she would plead illness, and not appear. I cannot finish the story—she is here." Eustace answered, by grasping the clergyman's

arm. "There is Lawson! O, Mr. Powell! there is, what I never perceived before, something subtle in his look—I doubt—I doubt—"

"Yet *your* relation may be cleared, should Lawson be found guilty."

"Do not suppose I do not feel the strongest, the most painful, desire that all should be searched out! Yet shall we be wiser? can we ever know, what perhaps God only knows, —the truth?"

He was interrupted by the loud exclamation, "Silence in the court!"—a notice which usually produces on the female part of an assembly a singular inclination to speak. Then in the perfect, breathless silence of the court was heard that solemn appeal to conscience. "Guilty, or not guilty!" An appeal which the English law has couched in the most impressive terms. All hung intent on the reply—all eyes were fixed upon the handsome face and elegant form of the prisoner. "Not guilty! So help me God?" And he spoke those solemn words with a readiness and distinctness which confirmed the good opinions, never lost, and scarcely now obliterated from the minds of those whose fathers and grandfathers have told the tale of Lawson's trial.

The pleading then began; there was little

occasion for eloquence, there was little eloquence employed. The simple narrative was enough. More harrowing, more disgusting details have, times innumerable, been disclosed; but none that shake the confidence of friendship more. The bond of relationship, the ties of obligation, the youth and inexperience of one party, the matured mind of the other; the dark design, cherished in scenes of domestic peace, executed in the absence of any exciting passion, infringing upon every notion of gentlemanly honour, destroying the respectability of a family, with whom the prisoner was so closely connected, seemed incredible to the good; infatuation, to the bad, in that assembly.

Then came those harrowing circumstances—the draught administered, the struggle, and the death-dews, and the convulsions! and his mother heard it all! She heard it, and she sat unmoved! For a stronger passion than even a mother's grief mastered the gentler feelings. She revelled, she rejoiced, in those details, for they unmasked her enemy.

He heard them too, and with a calm surprise; his pulse beat not one throb the quicker, his colour faded not, his hair stood not on end when the grim aspect of death was conjur-

ed up in the pleader's story; and the young victim even in his coffin—more—when his disturbed remains were hastily exhumed and exposed to the gaze of the indifferent, was placed by the power of language before the court. He heard it all unmoved, composed, respectful, patient, almost serene!

Lady Wentworth was the first witness called. She stood up in her place, by the courtesy of the Judge not being put into the witnesses'-box; and, through the long examination that ensued, her undaunted spirit never broke down beneath the influence of a single feeling. Her evidence was clear, minute, decided; nothing could shake it. Not all the insinuations of the skilful, not all the fixed and angry attention of the crowd, could enfeeble her testimony. It was *truth!* not a fraction was added nor a fraction taken away; it was facts that condemned the prisoner: and his case, as far as the impressions on the Jury were concerned, was, when Lady Wentworth ceased, virtually decided.

Then there were the servants, the apothecary, and every one employed near the room of Sir Horace, brought forward.—“The case wears a darker, and a darker aspect,” whispered Mr. Powell to Eustace; but still the

prisoner was calm, and unsubdued; cross-examining the witnesses himself with such acumen, that, as when he bowed it was remembered that he had been a Master of the Ceremonies, so now it was conjectured he must have been a lawyer.

The group of lowly witnesses were, one by one, dismissed. Mr. Lawson smiled as they departed; but when, in her weeds, and supported by her relation on the one hand and her father on the other, Adeline Floyer came into court, he was observed to turn pale; he faltered in his utterance, and asked gently for a glass of water.

The soft voice of Adeline Floyer responded faintly to the searching questions of the pleader. She wept as she perceived the impression which her words made. When she described the morning's walk, the laurel leaves she had observed Mr. Lawson to gather, the prisoner trembled. He soon recovered himself, but he challenged not the evidence of that unwilling witness. The smell of laurel-water resembled closely that of the draught which Lady Wentworth had given to her son, and which she had described as having "an ugly taste and an ugly smell."

Then there were horrible accounts of ani-

mals poisoned by laurel-water becoming convulsed, their eyes rolling, their heads up-reared, as if in agonies—the brute resemblance of Sir Horace's fate, his death re-pictured; yet still the mother fainted not—no—she looked on Lawson and was sustained. She could hear of the tortures which these poor animals suffered; and yet, no tender compassion for him whose dying agonies she had witnessed, diverted her from the hopes of vengeance—nay, these recitals stimulated her into fury.

The notion of arsenic having been administered, was now wholly abandoned; and the fell instrument of the young man's death was explained by the evidence to have been laurel-water. With the ingenuity of a guilty man, as it was said, Mr. Lawson had suggested the notion of arsenic, and had contrived to disseminate that idea, with the purpose, it was afterwards thought, of withdrawing the attention of the public from the actual state of the case.

The deposition of Sarah Blundell was read; her testimony chiefly related to the express charge of Mr. Lawson, that she should remove the bottles and other articles from the room; and, at her last examination, she had un-

willingly confessed that upon her allowing that she had not done so, "he had fallen into a violent passion, and commanded her instantly to clear these articles away."

Then the habits and pursuits of the prisoner were inquired into. His love of distillation, his eagerness to cleanse his still with lime shortly before the death of Sir Horace; his giving the still to the cook to purify it in her oven, an act of wonderful imprudence, or rather of an over prudence which is the offspring of guilt, and often defeats its own end. There were several parts of the prisoner's conduct which partook of this apprehensive and explanatory character, the detail of which carried conviction to the minds of most who were present of his delinquency; there was every presumption, yet no positive proof, of the dark offence; "another hand might have done the deed," said the cautious Mr. Meadows to his wife.

The web of artifice which Lawson had woven was fully displayed to the Jury; and little hope remained of his acquittal when Mr. Lawson began his defence. He had complained of indisposition, and had been accommodated with a seat; he now arose, and with an earnest manner, but without agitation, addressed himself to the Judge and Jury.

He appealed to their justice and humanity. "Although many false, malevolent, and cruel reports have been circulated in the public prints, and throughout the country," thus he spoke, and as he spoke, he turned his eyes full upon Lady Wentworth; "*tending to prejudice the minds of the people* in an opinion injurious to my honour, and dangerous to my life, I still have confidence that your justice and humanity cannot be misled by them."

A murmur of applause arose, which was instantly checked. A brief review of his married-life, made with a delicacy and feeling which touched the hearts even of the prejudiced, a graceful compliment to the virtues of him whose death he was supposed to have accelerated, a clear statement of all that had occurred since the demise of Sir Horace Wentworth, were heard with a certain sentiment of disappointment that there was no *more* to disclose.

"This, my lord," exclaimed Lawson, with sudden energy, "was the undisguised part I took; but such is my misfortune: not only has a gentleman unused to attend this bar, at whose persuasive abilities the most conscious innocence must tremble, been called in

against me; but the most trifling actions and expressions have been handled to my prejudice. My private letters have been broken into, and many unjustifiable steps have been taken to prejudice the world and invalidate my defence. But I depend upon the conscience of my Judge; I will rest upon the unprejudiced impartiality of my Jury; I trust my honour"—here Lady Wentworth *smiled*—"will be protected by their verdict."

He sat down, and ere the admiring assembly had had time to express their approbation, ere the ladies had dried their tears and the gentlemen decided *how* much of this they should believe—a common process in their transactions with their fellow men—a witness on whom all eyes were soon riveted stood up to aid the prisoner's defence.

Plain in attire, even to slovenliness, in a black, single-breasted coat, contrasting strongly with the ornamented *point-device* costume of the prisoner, a Scotchman, rather beyond the middle period of life, prepared to encounter the talents "at which even conscious innocence might tremble." Yet the emigrant from a northern region was well able to fight the intellectual fight unaided. His hair, nearly white, was thrown negligently back from a wide

and noble forehead, beneath which sparkled small but most expressive eyes, that looked analytically upon every object. The plain, harsh features of his country were softened by a redeeming benevolence of expression, save when the learned and honest surgeon,—for such he was who had been summoned by Lawson,—was fretted or agitated,—then the native violence of his temper broke forth—then the patient philosopher became an ungovernable child. He would remain under its influence pulseless, cold, though sensible, for nearly an hour. Its awful visitations, rebuking as it were the violence of passion, had all the character of approaching dissolution; and in one of these, brought on by a professional quarrel, this light of science, this upright and disinterested man—who was designed by Providence to be the high interpreter of God's mighty designs—expired.

The associate of Bankes, Watt, Blagden, Fordyce, Shuckburgh, Englefield—the despiser of patrons, the architect (under Providence) of his own greatness,—this surgical sage might well look calmly, if not proudly, upon the collected learning, wealth, talent, eloquence, which the court of Derby at that moment presented: yet, his homely attire,

his broad Scotch dialect, even his insensibility to the scene around him, provoked the derision of minds which could neither comprehend his value, nor understand the nature of his acquirements.

A laugh was heard from more quarters than one the instant that he opened his mouth; and the true Glasgow dialect—inferior, it is said, to that of Edinburgh in harshness, “but still not the voice of the nightingale,” as Sir Tufton observed,—was heard in a region all English. Thirty-five years before, Charles Edward Stuart would have given much to attain that accent, could it have rendered him dearer to a nation whose fidelity to the royal wanderer has raised them high in the scale of nations.

This celebrated physiologist, who astounded the medical profession by proving to them that *blood has life*, came forward to shake, by his evidence, every feeble hypothesis, every rash conjecture, that four surgeons and a physician had previously built upon the examination of the mouldering remains which they had disinterred. No one could presume to gainsay the great physiologist who had performed upwards of two thousand experiments on the inferior animals to verify his opinion.

He knew well that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made." There seemed from his judgment to be no appeal. But advocates, ignorant as they may sometimes chance to be of matters upon which fate and life hinge, have effrontery enough to attempt to expose the ignorance of others, and abundance of skill to conceal their own.

The evidence of this distinguished witness was truly characteristic of his country. "Let those who can, extract a direct answer from a Caledonian—few can boast of such skill," was the sneer of the opposing counsel. The learned Judge, in his charge, remarked, "I wished very much to have got a direct answer from the medical witness for the prisoner, but I could not."

"I have dissected," said the diligent surgeon, "some thousands of subjects during these thirty-three years. The appearances upon the dissection of this young gentleman's body explain,"—thus he replied to a question put to him,—"nothing but putrefaction."

No cross-examining, no hints of this nor suggestions of that, thrown in most skilfully by the barristers—and there were two who undertook *his* dissection—could cause the sturdy Scotchman to swerve from his point.

His pertinacity and caution combined, with a sort of cool contempt in his answers to those who looked at him with a perplexing sarcasm, expressed in eyes which twinkled under their wigs, embarrassed the whole court. His testimony was decidedly in favour of the prisoner. No inference, he declared, could be drawn that Sir Horace's death was produced by any poison. It was evident that he thought it might even have been caused by apoplexy.

"I wish," he said, bluntly, "that the head had been opened to remove all doubts."

Then the counsel engaged by Lady Wentworth tried compliment, and even flattery, to seduce the great surgeon to declare himself more explicitly.

"I ask your opinion, as a man of judgment, whether you don't think that draught was the cause of his death?"

"Every man, sir, is as good a judge as I am. With regard to his being in health, that explains nothing: we often see the healthiest people die suddenly, therefore I lay very little stress upon that."

"Give me your opinion," said the Judge, after the witness had tired out three lawyers, "whether, upon the whole of the symptoms

described, the death proceeded from that medicine, or from any other cause?"

"I speak the sentiments of my own mind: I can give nothing decisive."

He was allowed to withdraw, and a frown was observed on the countenance of Lady Wentworth. A deep silence—a silence of agony to some—followed the remarkable evidence of the philosopher. The causes of death had become unfathomable. That fearful and incomprehensible change in our mortal frame which goes on, silently, until "corruption shall have put on incorruption," had covered the event with a mystery only to be solved when all souls shall appear before their God.

The power of knowledge, the purity of the light of science, the clearness and confidence which it gives, were exemplified in a peculiar manner in the testimony of this witness: the men of his own profession who had preceded him in that court shone like faint, glimmering lights of earthly origin, in comparison with the bright, clear lustre which he threw into the moral atmosphere around him.

A smile of hope played upon the countenance of the unhappy prisoner, as, with an awkward nod, rather than bow, this distin-

guished man retired from the witness-box, and a messenger was dispatched to inform Mrs. Lawson—alas! poor Millicent—of the favourable progress of the trial.

It was Sir Tufton Tyrawley who gladly volunteered this good office: he repaired to the jailer's apartment. As he entered he heard the voice of the mother speaking to her child. She was seated on the floor, whilst her boy played with some toys, close beside the child, as if clinging to her last hope. She sprang up as Sir Tufton approached—every tint of colour vanished from her face.

“Don't tell me the worst!” she cried. “I can't—I can't bear it yet.”

“I came to bring you good news. I hope—we all hope things will end well.”

“I thought!—I knew as much! Oh, my poor Lawson, how he has been injured! I meant to bear up well, cousin Tufton, but I am as weak as a child; I am indeed.” She sat down, and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed violently. “Is it nearly over—and how does he bear it?” she asked, when her spirits were relieved by this burst of tears. “And, my mother?”—her voice fell to a whisper as she began the question, which she could not answer.

Sir Tufton was saved the difficulty of reply ; at this moment a hurried messenger came to summon him again to the court.

“ The evidence for Mr. Lawson is nearly closed,” said the gentleman who appeared. “ It is thought possible that witnesses to his honour and conduct might be serviceable to his cause. Sir Tufton, will you” —

“ Hum !— Is that elderly female dragon, Lady Wentworth, looking on still ? To say the truth, it’s rather awkward. I am connected with the family, you see, on the Wentworth side ;— I haven’t the honour of being related to Mr. Lawson. Mr. Lawson’s a very pleasant, gentlemanly man, no doubt ; but as to his principles, you know one don’t think much about that sort of thing in society. It makes one rather nervous being put upon oath — and such an oath ! Though it’s done at the rate of five words to a second ; still, it’s amazingly awful when one comes to think of it.”

“ You are grown serious, Sir Tufton,” said his companion, a solicitor employed for Mr. Lawson.

“ These things make one serious, sir. I can’t believe that Lawson poisoned poor Horace, or would do so ungentlemanly a

thing in any case. I shall be amazingly annoyed if they hang him — distinctions should be made; and it will be vastly hard if that old spindle-waisted fellow with the black patch on his head serves Lawson, who has been in good society, the same turn that he did that poor wretch who stole a sheep!—it's a vulgar way of doing things. Still, sir, if I am to be cross-questioned by that gentleman of stentorian voice and consummate impertinence, who knows so well how to make the galleries laugh—in short, don't ask me" —

By this time Sir Tufton and his guide had reached the outer hall, and were about to navigate through the still and breathless court. A lady was in the witness-box. Mrs. Stanhope Floyer had been called by Mr. Lawson's counsel to say all that she knew relative to the sudden disappearance of her husband. She had just withdrawn, and her loveliness, her modesty, and the melancholy story which her simple answers afforded, had interested the whole court; but had not removed an impression, that Stanhope Floyer was deeply implicated in this affair.

When Sir Tufton entered, the defence was just about to close. It was thought by the

counsel for Mr. Lawson hazardous to examine witnesses to his character, or to "draw his frailties from their dread abode." The man of society—he whose accustomed sphere was the drawing-room of the great—had not a single true friend who could step forward and rescue his name from opprobrium. Some of his acquaintance, involved in debt, could not appear; others had only shared his vices; many had suffered from his proficiency at the gaming-table; most declared they knew him too little; many knew him too well.

The Judge then rose to deliver his charge, and the motley and heterogeneous assembly rose also. Those who remember Sir Francis Buller will bear testimony to the goodness and integrity of his character. His deportment corresponded with the graces of his mind.

Never was a charge delivered with greater impartiality; never has it been so difficult to decide, from Mr. Justice Buller's summing-up, what was his private and particular opinion. He warned the Jury to "divest their minds of all those reports which had been disseminated to the injury of the prisoner;" "for nothing tends more," remarked the Judge, "to corrupt the course of justice

than attempting to prejudice men's minds before the case begins. On the part of the prosecution a great deal of evidence has been laid before you. It is all circumstantial evidence, and in its nature it must be so, for in cases of this sort no man is weak enough to commit the act in the presence of other persons; and a presumption, which necessarily arises from circumstances, is very often more convincing and satisfactory than any other kind of evidence, because it is not within the reach and compass of human abilities to invent a train of circumstances which shall be so connected together as to amount to a proof of guilt, without affording opportunities of contradicting a great part, if not all, of those circumstances. But if the circumstances are such as, when laid together, bring conviction on your minds, it is then fully equal, if not—as I have told you before—more convincing than positive evidence.”

The Jury retired to their consultation, and the Judge withdrew to take refreshment, for the trial had lasted many hours. There was a regale of oranges in the lower court; and the grand jury went out, and came back eating sandwiches. The counsel amused them-

selves with innocent recreations and practical jokes on each other, whilst a human being sat shivering in their presence, awaiting his *doom*. Who would have recognized the gay, the graceful Lawson *now*? His very height seemed diminished; his features were shrunk; yet he maintained his composure: once only a shudder came over him palpably, and it was observed by one who never withdrew her eyes from his countenance. Byron says, "the embrace of hate is warmer than that of love:" one may say much the same of its gaze—fixed, discerning, unsparing.

The eyes of the fated one and of his persecutor once met. The prisoner drew his hand over his forehead, and withdrew it not again until the Jury returned to their places. One half hour—one short half hour—and your hatred, vindictive woman! will be sated. See!—the Judge has returned to his seat. The Barristers are still and attentive. The Sheriff resumes his wand of office. The Jurymen are hastening back to their places. They are unanimous. Will their decree give the prisoner back to society again, his honour retrieved—his humanity cleansed from a foul stain—his sorrows assuaged—his innocence his reward and support? Will it restore him

to his wife—to his home? Will it rescue his son from the stain of a felon's offspring? or shall the sin and disgrace be visited even unto the third generation? Shall a heavy retribution fall upon the innocent offspring of the condemned?

There is a little confusion among the Jury—an embarrassment, a reluctance, in their foreman. It is transient—the word is uttered. The attentive Judge receives it, not unmoved, for he was humane, but with a grave composure; and as it passed from mouth to mouth Lady Wentworth rose up and clapped her hands. There was a murmur of disapprobation throughout the court, and the chaplain—even her chaplain—entreated her to leave it. No! In an instant she was calm, motionless, attentive. That momentary rapture when the word "Guilty" met her ear, is quelled. Lady Wentworth remains.

Amid sobs,—nay, shrieks,—hysterics many, —surrounded by tearful eyes and pitying hearts, the Judge stood up—the hour, to a compassionate man so bitter, had arrived. The fatal cap was placed upon the head of him who, at that instant, would perhaps have willingly laid aside his proud, pre-eminent station to have escaped the doomsman's

office. And the prisoner whom he was to send to an ignominious death had not fulfilled half the span of life—young, admired, prosperous, how heavily the stroke of fate descended upon *his* head!

Truly, and beautifully, and eloquently,—with judicial dignity,—with parental pity,—with the heavenly mercy with which a blameless man is most disposed to view the sinning,—did the Judge address the unfortunate being whose very hours were numbered. He did not palliate the crime; he painted it in true colours. “Of all felonies,” observed the good man, in a voice clear but tremulous, “murder is the most horrible—of all murders, poisoning is the most detestable; it is a secret act against which there are no means of preserving nor defending a man’s life. The place and manner where this dark deed was executed must enhance your guilt! It was committed in a place where suspicion at the instant must have slept; where you had access as a bosom friend and a brother; where you saw the representative of an ancient house reside in affluence; but where your ambition led you proudly, and vainly, to remove him—the obstacle to your own greatness. For the deed, which must soon bring you to an

untimely grave, avarice was your motive, hypocrisy the means. Heaven, in most cases, marks out the murderer! Soon will you appear before an Almighty Judge, where unfathomable wisdom is able, by means incomprehensible to our narrow capacities, to reconcile justice with mercy."

He paused. The Judge, experienced in human affairs, long acquainted with the guilty, curious in such matters as display the mind of man, looked earnestly on the prisoner. No change—not a muscle of his countenance was moved. He listened as one attentive and respectful that was all.

Sir Francis Buller proceeded. Those last, sad, solemn wishes for a departing soul soon to be *judged*, were uttered in a low, impressive tone, in words which thrilled the listeners around with emotions which can only be experienced in a court of justice—when man condemns his fellow-man to the lonesome grave—when we look upon the isolated wretch, the being upon whom the mark is set, as a thing soon to be severed from the short-lived companions of his destiny here—one who is to travel to the regions of repose through the agonies of a terrible departure. The last, best wishes that man can proffer man were

uttered; the fatal cap was withdrawn—the dock is vacant—the prisoner is gone! The crowd disperses; the Judge disappears; the streets, lately so empty, are now teeming with those who will never forget what they have witnessed. Hark! the peal of All Saints' deep-toned bells! The assizes are over! There is a ball to-night.

CHAPTER XII.

Hence pale Revenge
Unsheathes her murd'rous dagger.

AKENSIDE.

By eight o'clock that evening, how merry was the old town of Derby! the shops blazed still with lights, the streets were crowded with country-people. Barristers, having dis-

was a thin, angular man, with decided features, and an eye of powerful expression. Never were the animal passions and the intellectual powers so strongly blended in one countenance. At present he was only midway in that career which ended upon the proudest eminence. Perhaps he was a happier—certainly he was a better—man at this season of his life than when, to obtain an honour, paltry in comparison with self-respect, he ratted—and became the greatest of his (then) low species.

How badly he danced, and how powerfully he talked! How thoughtful was his countenance when sometimes, between the pauses of a *cotillon*, he referred to the scene of the morning, and remarked that there was no doubt of Lawson's guilt—the rinsing of the bottle condemned him; and *thought*—and his deep sunk eye was lowered as the thought was matured and registered in his mind—that, though manifestly guilty, he ought not to have been condemned—an opinion which has since been generally expressed concerning this remarkable trial.

The steps were not the less perfect, faces were not the less merry, because breaking hearts beat in the dark prisons near the revelers, because the gibbet was to rise ere morn.

In truth, the subject which seemed by act of parliament to be prescribed to all dancers that night—the universal question, “Were you at the trial to-day?”—promoted discourse, induced intimacy, and enlivened the country-dance and the supper hour.

It cannot have been a Christian institution, that assize ball—worthy of the French revolution, and linked in memory with dresses *à la victime*. Yet it was a remarkably joyous evening. Mr. Gadsden was made much of by Miss Darnford’s Derby connexions, and was introduced to the rector of All Souls, the curate of St. Abb’s, and the master of the Free School. There was something particular in the mode of these introductions which did not strike Mr. Gadsden as being particular at the time; nor could he, poor man! in the innocence of his heart, guess that Miss Darnford had given out that “they were keeping company together.” Poor Mr. Gadsden! he had about as much sense and experience as a moth when near a candle.

By eleven—for the men of law were all to be up at six next morning, and off to another “inquest for blood,”—cloaks and pattens came for some, chairs for others, lanterns for many, —such a thing as gas-light would have been

regarded as witchcraft,—coaches for the country great, gigs for the country small. A few old ladies—a few clergymen—lingered over the last pool of quadrille; a few doctors, who had been sent for, or who had sent themselves away, came back just in time to shew that they had been away. There was plenty of laughing, flirting, complimenting, in the passage. Some of the gentlemen had even got tipsy to do honour to the occasion, for supper had taken place at ten; but these were nobodies, as Miss Darnford assured Mr. Gadsden.

Could a gnome have flitted into various dwellings in Derby that night, what various scenes he, she, or it would have witnessed! The town was sleepless; the clergy were in communication with the jail-chaplain all night, to learn if the prisoner made confession. The worthy Judge sent, the last thing before he went to rest, to inquire if any avowal of the crime had been made. The counsel were supping and drinking; much the same might be said of the solicitors. Mr. and Mrs. Meadows sat soberly by the comfortable fire in the King's Head parlour. Loftus had just gone out.

“Loftus is hen-pecked, I think,” said Mrs. Meadows, “he’s so remarkably civil and

so extremely polite. Ah! after all, he's a dear boy, and would love me very much if Mrs. Loftus was not so jealous of my looking as young as herself, it's quite evident! She would have been mad if she had seen Sir Tufton to-day. So devoted to me! poor man. How will you have your bed warmed to-night, dear; with brown sugar in the pan, or not?"

"Ah! my dear, my spirits are exceedingly low! Every one says Stanhope Floyer had a share in it."

"Well, what matters that now? he's not in the way to be tried, and to lower the family. Say nothing about it, and nobody will say anything to you. It's extremely troublesome of Mr. Lawson that he won't confess; it's not placing confidence in his friends; and they can do nothing more to him than hang him, it will make no difference. How will you have your gruel, dear—salt or sugar? What a remarkably genteel person that waiter is! I declare I've quite cried my eyes out to-day."

In the opposite room to that in which this comfortable and well-assorted couple were seated, Mr. Eustace Floyer paced up and down the room.

“It is not twelve o'clock yet,” he said, stopping [now and then, and addressing his mother. “She is to stay till twelve. Gracious heavens, that such a calamity—such a disgrace—should fall upon Lawson!”

“And you never during the course of your acquaintance with him, Eustace, suspected any depravity in his nature?”

“Never! Nor can I credit it now! There will always rest on my mind a conviction that Lawson is not guilty.”

“Then who is, Eustace?”

“I cannot in the remotest degree conjecture. God grant—I was going to utter a strange wish—God grant that he may confess! But hark! one, two, three quarters struck. The time is arrived. Poor Millicent! Poor Adeline!”

Eustace hastily went out into the streets. Sensitive, a little proud in some respects, ambitious of good repute, and punctilious in all that society demands from a man of a certain station, Eustace was stung to the quick by the stain which Lawson's supposed dishonour had brought upon an ancient and respected family; he was worked almost into fury by the prevalent suspicions whispered concerning the participation of Stanhope Floyer in the dark affair.

“It shall be the purpose of my life—my daily employment, to search out those who have lured Stanhope away,” he thought to himself, as he paced the streets of Derby, his tall, commanding figure, in the courtly and rich attire of those times, extracting many an exclamation of admiration from some of the parties who were wending their way home from different places. “And, Adeline,” he said to himself, “she who is born to be the ornament, the example, to society; *her* name to be coupled to one that is tainted with the suspicion of a crime! ah! it is not *that* she feels most.” He sighed bitterly as these reflections occurred to him; but the sight of the prison, the aspect of those gloomy walls, recalled him to recollections still more poignant.

By the interest of some of the magistrates, Mr. Floyer was now permitted, at this late hour, to enter that gloomy abode. He knocked at the outer gate, and presently a light was brought, and Eustace walked into a small room.

As he waited there, what a crowd of ideas rushed into the mind of the young and prosperous man, who had scarcely tasted of care! what a mass of crime and wickedness

was collected around the gloomy court, in which the jailer's apartments stood!

"But *they*," exclaimed the high-minded young man, clasping his hands together; "were illiterate, desperate men; starving, perhaps tempted without the means of resistance in their own minds. But here was one on whom the blessings of fortune were showered, whose guilt sinks himself and the class with whom he has been associated in infamy."

He was interrupted by a messenger. "You may see Mr. Lawson, sir; but not for a long time —"

"Has he confessed?" asked Eustace, as they passed up stairs.

"No!"

The door opened as he spoke, and Mr. Floyer entered the parlour of the governor. On an old, miserable sofa, Millicent, as if stunned by a violent blow, lay senseless; beside her, Adeline knelt, looking with despair upon the fair, cold face, which had shewn no signs of consciousness since the intelligence which had bereft Mrs. Lawson of recollection had been imparted.

The breathings of the child in sleep were the only sounds which, for a time, broke the silence of that chamber.

“How can I — how can I — wish her to recover?” said Adeline, looking up at Sir Tufton Tyrawley, who stood beside her; “death is no evil to the wretched,” and as she spoke the recollection of her own sufferings came across her; a few bitter tears fell upon the hand which she held.

“She *is* recovering,” said Sir Tufton, after a pause of many moments; as he spoke, Millicent started, and looked eagerly around her.

“Is he reprieved? has there been *no* message from the Judge? from nobody?” No one answered, and she sank faint and exhausted, but not unconscious.

“Is he reprieved?” she asked again, in a few moments. “Has any one been? do not deceive me! Answer, — as you value your salvation, answer.”

“We dare not hope,” replied Adeline; for neither Sir Tufton nor Eustace could find words to reply.

“Not hope! are you quite sure, quite, quite sure? could Lady Wentworth do nothing if she went to the Judge? if my mother interceded, could nothing be done?”

Adeline looked towards Sir Tufton, as much as to say, ‘Do you answer this searching question.’ Sir Tufton was now fairly overpowered, but he tried to do his best.

“My dear Millicent, my poor cousin, there is nothing to be done; nothing, I fear, to be done!”

Mrs. Lawson did not answer for some time. Slowly her mind seemed to take in conviction.

“There is much to be done!” she said, fervently, and she folded her hands, as if in prayer. “Give me my shawl, Adeline! let me go, let me go to him! there is no time to be lost; we must entreat Lawson to prepare. He has never thought of God!” She turned round her ghastly face and hollow eyes, with a look so awe-struck to those who beheld her, that never could they forget that hour. The thoughtless being who had never had a serious reflection, had been chastened in that gloomy dungeon; converted into the humble penitent.

“The clergyman has been with him, dear Millicent,” said Sir Tufton.

“Ay! but forms will do nothing with *him*. I once had influence; and though long estranged, poor — poor Lawson will listen to me now.”

She spoke in the hurried manner of one whose brain can hardly bear its burden of recollections, whose reason totters; yet, sufferer! thy motives and thy efforts were heard on high!

"Give me my shawl, Adeline, and let my boy come with me!" She stood and looked for some moments on her child, irresolute whether or not to awaken him; "He sleeps! *he* knows nothing," she turned away from the cot wherein the child lay, and ringing a bell, the master of the jail himself appeared.

"Take me to Mr. Lawson," said Millicent; "what is the hour?"

"It is now, madam," returned the man, "near eleven o'clock."

"And when," cried the wretched wife, holding her hand to her head as if her throbbing veins would burst; "and when,—when?"

She sank down on the floor as she spoke, and hysterical sobs shook her frame.

Eustace now advanced; "I," he said, with deep concern painted on his countenance, "have a claim, indeed a permission, to see Mr. Lawson; let me," he added kindly, "go first, perhaps, I may induce him to unfold the circumstances—the—to impart to me—"

"If you mean, sir, that you hope to persuade him to confess," exclaimed Millicent, resentfully, "you will be disappointed. Mr. Lawson is wholly innocent! My brother's death rests not on his head; he has faced inquiry; he has not fled from punishment; but I must

—I must go," she added, in a hurried tone; "I know—I know, he will not listen to the chaplain. Yet," she resumed, after a moment's reflection, "it shall not be said afterwards that I stood between him and confession. I have borne much with him here—his honour is dearer to me than it ever was. Go, Mr. Floyer; see if you can persuade him to confess the deed. Never! never! Yet, go!—Stay not long," she added, imploringly; "remember we have but a short time to be together—to talk about our child—my mother! Stop, Adeline. Cousin Tyrawley, can I quit the jail to-night?"

"You—oh! certainly, and better far that you should, my dear Millicent," replied Sir Tufton; "'tis not a scene for a lady; and as one of the family, let me advise you."

"Oh! harass me not with counsels. Leave the wretched to themselves; I am too wretched to hear advice with patience. Take me to my mother."

"Willingly, but I fear it will be a very awkward and extremely unpleasant scene. And won't it occasion the affairs of the family to be more talked about, and—"

"O God! grant me patience! I must—I must go—I want to see my mother. Hark! there is not an instant to be lost; I *will* see

my mother: I will entreat her to save Lawson."

"Pray comply instantly with her request," whispered Eustace Floyer to Sir Tufton. "It is not well," he added, whilst his eyes were dimmed by tears, "to oppose, to counsel those who are in agony."

"Lady Wentworth's influence is very great, I grant you," returned Sir Tufton, in the same tone, "at her own place; but here, people don't respect old families as they should do; however—"

"See! they are gone!" said Eustace; and the voices of Millicent and Adeline, down the corridor, calling on the baronet to follow them, hastened him away.

Mr. Floyer was left alone in the jailer's parlour. What a crowd of reflections occupied the few moments which passed whilst he was waiting there, and before he was fetched away to the interview which he had solicited with Lawson.

The prisoner was not in the condemned cell; his station had been taken into consideration, and the criminal who most, perhaps, deserved severity, was leniently treated, and accommodated with a small, remote sleeping-chamber. One of the turnkeys was sitting on a truckle

bed near him; the prisoner was writing at the time.

Mr. Lawson was pale and haggard, but yet he smiled as Mr. Floyer entered, and pointing to his foot and ankle, said, "I must apologize for not rising to receive you, Mr. Floyer, you see I am ironed."

"Can I have some conversation with Mr. Lawson alone?" asked Eustace, turning to the head-turnkey who had attended him.

"I thank you for the honour you do me," interposed Lawson, coolly; "but I have declined such interviews. It is quite enough to have the society of the chaplain for three hours. With regard to the murder of my brother-in-law, Sir Horace Wentworth, I have made up my mind—I will not disclose anything nor commit anybody."

"I have no right, Mr. Lawson," replied Eustace, in a mild yet firm tone, "to presume to dictate to you in your concerns, nor to endeavour to influence you to anything from which you shrink. But as the relative of Mr. Stanhope Floyer, as his executor and the next heir to his property,—he has mysteriously disappeared, there have been reflections on his absence, doubts even have been expressed of his being totally innocent of all

participation in this affair—I entreat you, as a gentleman, as a friend of the deceased, do not let his memory,—the memory of one who exists no longer,—Stanhope is no more! remove this foul stain if you can from our family.”

“Was Mr. Stanhope Floyer’s conduct and character such as to repel this and other accusations?” asked Mr. Lawson contemptuously; “if so, why should you come to me? Why should you trouble yourself to clear a man whom the world would naturally be disposed to acquit? Excuse me, sir, I have some testamentary arrangements to make; I am sorry it is not in my power to continue the conversation: I have the honour to wish you good-night.”

Mr. Lawson turned away as he spoke, and began writing. Eustace stood looking at him for some moments. The lines of cunning, the general air of duplicity, had become more marked during his imprisonment; there was something either very great or very shocking in his present imperturbability.

“Take away these books—they crowd me,” said Lawson, pushing from the table some works of devotion. “I am sorry,”—he wrote as he went on,—“you should lose your time

in this dark little hole, Mr. Floyer. I have no information to give you—not a word! So Mr. Stanhope Floyer is said to be drowned! he may be, it is very possible.”

“Can nothing—cannot the prospect of eternity avail,” said Eustace, solemnly, “to induce you to unravel this mystery,—to disclose the secret of this dark affair?”

“Mr. Floyer,” returned Lawson, looking up; “that Sir Horace was poisoned, I believe! the burden of that crime lies between the parties at that moment in the house. I solemnly call God to witness, I am innocent of his death.”

Eustace held up his hands, as if to say “Stop! hesitate ere you blaspheme the God of truth, and call upon his name to sanction a falsehood.” The countenance of the good and pitying man was overspread by the deepest awe.

“I suppose that you and Sir Tufton Tyrawley will take care of my poor wife when I am gone,” resumed Lawson, his voice trembling a little. “I would rather not see Millicent again; but, should she insist upon it, pray enforce that the interview be short. Can my boy be brought to me?”

“He can;—and oh! Mr. Lawson, before

you look upon innocence, remember that the pure in heart alone—”

“Really, Mr. Floyer, I have had so much of this, I must crave your mercy! I am extremely sorry that you should have been standing all this time,” added the polite criminal, bowing his head almost on the table as Eustace left the apartment, yet not turning to look upon his visitant.

Mrs. Lawson, meanwhile, with Adeline and Sir Tufton, proceeded to the inn where Lady Wentworth passed the night. The afflicted Millicent had not quitted the prison before a sudden thought seized her.—“Let me go back for Edmund; the sight of him must surely soften my mother’s heart.” This detained the party, and when they reached the King’s Head, it was considerably after twelve o’clock.

They feared that Lady Wentworth might have retired to bed, but Millicent knew better. “My mother’s hours are late,” she said; “she sleeps but little. How strange I feel! how feeble!” added the long-immured prisoner—“that glare of light blinds me—my legs tremble—my knees totter—but if I can but have strength just to go to *her*—.”

She stopped and shook with fear at the door

of Lady Wentworth's sitting-room. Early associations returned to the often-intimidated daughter; and Lady Wentworth's voice, in high excitement, drove away every tinge of colour from her daughter's cheek and lips. She drew a deep sigh, and with a stern effort opened the door. Lady Wentworth, who was pacing up and down the room, stopped short; the mother and daughter stood face to face—they had not met for months; and the humiliated, dishevelled, and sickly appearance of her daughter caught Lady Wentworth's attention; a transient, a very transient sentiment of compassion possessed that breast which scarcely knew a gentle feeling.

“So you are come back—you have left the wretch at last. I knew you would—such evidence,—such proof,—as if the deed had been done before one's very eyes. I am glad you are convinced.”

“Madam!” cried Millicent, falling on her knees,—she drew her boy towards her as she spoke—“look here!” She gazed up at Lady Wentworth with that appealing, piteous look, which spoke far more than words. “Is he not like my brother?”

“He is Lawson's child,” returned Lady Wentworth sullenly; and she resumed her

walk up and down the room; "if you want protection or help for one of *his* children, do not come to me."

"But he is your grandson," persisted Millicent, "and I am your daughter. Mother, your evidence this day has sent his father to his doom. Unjustly, I know! Untimely—disgracefully. Look upon this boy! he is the heir of Coughton. O let not his name be branded with—with—I cannot speak it, I am weak and faint; I am unused to light and air."

"Well," said Lady Wentworth, "there is my carriage and horses to convey you far from this place, and your child too. What else do you want of me?"

"Ask pardon for my husband!" shrieked Millicent, in a tone which would have gone through any heart save that of her who thirsted for blood. "Save him! save my child!"

Lady Wentworth stood as if paralysed. She stopped short in her perturbed walk, and came near to the place where Millicent knelt. Her form shook with passion, and ere she spoke her chaplain obsequiously stepped forward to her relief.

"It would be of no use, Mrs. Lawson; Sir Tufton, as a man of the world must know that. I believe the very hour is fixed," he added, in a whisper to Sir Tufton.

“—And if it would be of use, fool !” exclaimed Lady Wentworth, who had now recovered from her surprise, and mastered all those gentle feelings which they who have known the depths of infamy well say are never wholly extinct in the worst of our species—“and if I could save him ! I have no patience.” She stamped her foot in fury—“Save him ! I loved my son too well. I am not so false to the memory of my poor Horace as not to seek revenge. Revenge,” she added, in a deep, hoarse, tone “is all I have on this earth now. Save him ! see there !” and she pointed to a heap of white favours lying on the table. “’Tis not my wedding-day to-morrow. It is something far better—his—”

She stopped, for a sudden action of Millicent’s startled her. Mrs. Lawson had risen from her knees. “Take me away !” exclaimed the unfortunate Millicent, her arms dropping listlessly down ; and she looked from one to another for help. “Take me away ! I can—I can bear the prison better than this.” She sank into Adeline’s arms as she spoke, and they bore her to her carriage.

Let us pass over those last scenes in which the dignity of innocence was not given to hallow the brutality of an execution.

No one knew what passed between the condemned criminal and his wife during that night ; to no one was it disclosed how far Lawson confided to his wife the secret of his guilt, or whether he maintained to her his innocence. By the friends who supported her by their presence, and who left not the prison until they took her from it, she was seen no more until at eight o'clock on the ensuing day, when she was carried to her carriage, her child following her, and she left Derby for ever.

In the course of time, however, it was distinctly understood that Lawson, to the very last moment of his existence, maintained his innocence. All the offices of religion were ministered to him, and were, towards the morning, accepted. He died, as the multitude thought, and as they still think, "very like a gentleman." What was judged in those eternal councils where the impenitent cannot hope for grace, shall only be known hereafter.

Daylight beheld a party quitting the scene of so much misery, and taking their course southward. The group was composed of Mrs. Lawson, her son, her relative Sir Tufton, and Adeline ; and they travelled far and long, ere they returned to their respective homes.

Those who remained in Derby recalled, in

later years, a scene of an unparalleled description. By twelve, the sound of that bell which is consecrated to the dead, slow, solemn, ceasing suddenly — that passing-bell on which even the wretched felon of former times, placed a reliance — had tolled for Lawson. Assembled crowds had dispersed ere the hour of noon was struck. The guilty man's soul had been thus hurried, unreclaimed, to its destination by a barbarous and now repealed law, which in the tumults of former times decreed, and perhaps necessarily, that the sentence of death once pronounced should be executed within twelve hours.

Lawson died calmly—unconfessing. As his last agonies ceased, a carriage which had been observed by many persons, with the Wentworth arms upon it, and drawn by six horses, drove away. The servants and postilions were dressed in state-liveries, and wore white favours in their hats; the horses were decked with white ribbons. It was said, but charity forbids us to entertain such a report (yet to what will not revenge bring us?) that Lady Wentworth was seated in the carriage and that she beheld the execution.

CHAPTER XIII

Malv. 'Tis but fortune ; all is fortune. I have heard herself come thus near that, should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion.

Twelfth Night.

Most people looked upon Mr. Lawson's trial as a sort of gala occasion, and among

since been despatched to all the clients to that effect. Now when Mr. Meadows first quarreled with Loftus, there was great consolation in resorting to the Brooksbanks, for sympathy and assistance. Mr. Brooksbank was everything; so charming, clever, and good. Mrs. Brooksbank's "kindness in an hour of affliction Mrs. Meadows could never forget." The Loftuses were now humbled, and there was no glory in upsetting them any longer. Loftus had no practice—and in such a case there is always sure to be a large family: he grew poorer and poorer, and ended in being dependent on his father. The Brooksbanks had grown rich, and were actually setting up a tandem. The vicissitudes of life ought *not* to surprise us, but they do—perhaps to shew us our folly, and to manifest to our blindness the sublunary nature of those things on which we found our notions of stability.

In the midst of sundry skirmishes, and the social warfare which woman carries on against woman, an awkward accident occurred to Mrs. Meadows. Mr. Meadows died, and what was more—he died intestate. It was an extraordinary conclusion to a life of method and punctuality. He died in a moment when he had least expected it, and without a will.

He who had lived, as it were, on parchment—but there is no comprehending anything.

I pass over the grief of Mrs. Meadows, which increased considerably upon the discovery, or rather upon the non-discovery, to which I have referred. She mourned, however, in plenty of legitimate crape; all that broad hems could do—all that black crape could do—all that bombazin could do, was done to shew her respect for the departed. For weeks her face was never seen, except through a double fall of crape that descended from her bonnet. For months she never so much as looked upon a narrow hem. It always puzzles me to think what the width of one's hems can have to do with the depth of one's grief. The unfeelingness of lace, and the disrespect and profaneness to the departed of a bright silk, instead of a dead silk, never crossed her thoughts; and when her maid talked of letting her hair grow again!—shocking! it was unfeeling to entertain such an idea.

Mrs. Meadows required a great deal of spiritual consolation; and there was a widower clergyman, the master of a large boys' school, who seemed disposed to administer it very frequently. To aid his efforts in restoring the widow to cheerfulness she frequently stayed tea.

Mrs. Brooksbank, who was a knowing, shrewd, vulgar woman, remarked to Mr. Brooksbank, that perhaps he considered Mrs. Meadows the most fitted to succeed *his* departed saint, on whom he had shed tears every Sunday during his sermon, now for a year and more. But Mrs. Brooksbank never hinted the subject to Mrs. Meadows until one fatal morning she found Mrs. Meadows in tears. These were things of course, but Louisa rallied from them becomingly.

“No news from Mrs. Stanhope yet?” inquired the wife of Mr. Meadows’ successor. She was a thickset woman with a handsome face and a loud voice, two things that often go together in the nether walks of life. There is an excitement in the adulation paid to handsome women that makes them think they may talk loud.

“Yes! a letter to-day,—excessively overcome, of course. But since her beloved, darling father’s remains were interred before Mrs. Stanhope could even hear of his death, she doesn’t mean to return to Woodcote as yet. She’s very right, for there is [nothing more desolate than — may you long be exempt from it, Mrs. Brooksbank!—the condition of a widow.”

“Brooksbank is strong and hearty, thank God!” said Mrs. Brooksbank, confidently,—“I hope—for the sake of his family. By the bye, a man with a family must look about him. You didn’t think to pen a few lines to Sir Tufton, mentioning how glad we should be to have his law-business? We’ve so many to put out into the world.”

“Why, indeed, Mrs. Brooksbank, I must decline: mine is a delicate situation, an unprotected female. Sir Tufton’s a young man, and already I find people thinking of what I never think of for myself, a subject that I’m sure is buried in the grave—marriage! It was a topic I never did think anything of when I was a girl; and if poor Mr. Meadows hadn’t been so deeply attached and so anxious for our union!—ah! Mrs. Brooksbank, I have lost a most devoted husband!”

Mrs. Brooksbank waited till the customary downfall of tears, regularly shed and duly expected, was leisurely wiped away. She was a plain-spoken woman. “My dear, it would be as well, then, if you didn’t encourage the visits of Mr. Jones so often; he is a widower, you a widow. He has children, who, as he told me himself, particularly want a mother. He was saying to me the other day, how

dreadfully expensive he found it was, having nothing made at home; how their stockings were neglected:—and, poor man! he complained so of his bills; and the fine linen, he tells me, is shamefully charged.”

“—And how can that affect me?” cried Mrs. Meadows, indignantly; “Mr. Jones and I can never, possibly, be anything more than friends to each other. If there is a thing I abhor in life, Mrs. Brooksbank, it is a widower with children: if there is a thing I detest, it is a boys’ school. Allow me to change this subject; nothing would grieve me more than to hurt poor Mr. Jones’s feelings, therefore, I beg, if there’s to be any talking about me in Northington—”

“No, my dear,” returned Mrs. Brooksbank, “it’s only between Brooksbank and myself; he, you know, feels such an interest in all that relates to you and yours. Good-b’ye, Mrs. Meadows! you’ll think about Sir Tufton.”

She left Mrs. Meadows to her reflections on the embarrassment of seeing, and the propriety of not seeing, Mr. Jones that evening. It was a wet afternoon; the climate often influences our fate in a peculiarly striking manner. Had it been a fine cheerful evening

when Louisa could have taken a stroll to the circulating library, and held half an hour's gossip with Mrs. Pugh, there; or dropped in to her dress-maker's and been complimented on the fit of her dress, or held a consultation on the forthcoming sleeve, Mrs. Meadows would have, possibly, excluded Mr. Jones; but the rain drove against the window, — there was a dreary sameness in the distant prospect. Louisa was no reader. She had now no shirts to hem frills for—her cat was her only object of care; and, in a widow's state of royal seclusion and decorous *inertia*, there was a degree of *ennui* which Louisa's lively spirits could ill sustain.

By the time that the door-bell rang, Louisa had become tolerably anxious for its well-known sound. Mr. Jones was a long time taking off his coat and overalls; there was a grand operation necessary to undo his gashes, for he knew Mrs. Meadows did not like to have her carpets soiled; and when, at last, he did appear, there was nothing in Mr. Jones's exterior likely to render attractive the character of a lover, with which Mrs. Brooksbank's advice and precautions had invested him.

Mr. Jones was a thin, sallow, shattered-

looking gentleman, slow in speech, and correct in manner; the very opposite to Mrs. Meadows. He took about half an hour to inform the widow that it was a very wet evening; then another twenty minutes elapsed before he could put her in full possession of his sentiments as to whether there would or would not be rain on the morrow. Having settled this point at last, he sat down in the late Mr. Meadows' elbow-chair, and made himself comfortable.

“— Sir Tufton Tyrawley come to Tufton Court yet?” asked Mrs. Meadows, fearful from some premonitory symptoms of unwonted dispatch, that Mr. Jones was about to begin upon the eternal theme of his children. “I fancy so,” she added; “Jim, the butcher's boy, was riding up to our back-door, when, as old Patty tells me, he was beckoned off by Sir Tufton's man, who ordered him to tell his master to have a fore-quarter of lamb—no, it was a hind-quarter, a fillet, I think, of veal, a round of beef—all to be hung ready for next week. I never attend to what servants say, so I hear very little—can't hear too little, in my present state of health and spirits, of my neighbours and their proceedings. Ah! Mr. Jones, I was the object of

all his interest; never was there such a husband! Ah! it is a loss one never can recover!"

"Never! did you say, never, madam?" asked Mr. Jones, taking an hour between the two words.

"I wonder if he takes as long to flog his boys?" thought Louisa to herself.—"I did say never, Mr. Jones. I may say so, young as I am, with a weary life before me; but I don't wish to distress you, Mr. Jones."

"It is so like my own case," replied Mr. Jones, taking out, in the course of the next ten minutes, a blue silk-kerchief, and leisurely wiping a tear from each eye. He might have assuaged a deluge in the time.

"You will recover, Mr. Jones! You are quite a young man yet; you have ties, I have none;—only such ties as I should like very much to undo," thought Mrs. Meadows, recurring to Loftus and his three wanting, hungry, children, — "you have interests."

Mr. Jones made a sort of burring, the relic of an original stammer, before he spoke—it was scarcely to be called an impediment; it was rather the preparatory note of the nightingale before she begins to quaver.

“But, my dear madam, I wish to make those ties mutual; those interests we could share between us, might we not?”

By the time he had finished his speech Mrs. Meadows had time to prepare, and to parry the attack.

“It would be *sharing*, indeed,” thought she; “sharing dirt, poverty, and dulness, three things Louisa Meadows won’t be entrapped into, thank you. My dear sir! you surprise me amazingly! Surely!” with a deep sigh, “you forget—you forget how lately I have surrendered my hopes of happiness to the tomb.—This is vastly amusing,” thought the widow in her secret soul.

“Sympathy!” said the slow Mr. Jones, sounding the word as if he were going to speak it first and spell it afterwards—“sympathy forbids my forgetting your loss when I recal my own. To make a long story very short, my dear Mrs. Meadows, don’t call me premature, but affection—regard, you know; and affection and regard,—that’s it,” thought Mr. Jones, writing out an English exercise in his own thoughts, “dictate—yes, dictate jealousy!”

“Jealousy! Mr. Jones!”

“Yes, madam! the interest you show in

Sir Tufton Tyrawley's domestic affairs, and his marked preference of *your* society, whenever he has been here—"

"Thank you for the information," thought Louisa. "Don't be agitated—now don't be flurried, Mr. Jones, about *me!* surely I'm not worthy so much concern!"

"Worthy! But to state my feelings at length, I—"

"We'll have the roasted-apples up first, my good friend," said Mrs. Meadows, rising to ring the bell;—"how could you tell that Sir Tufton Tyrawley's partial to your humble servant?"

"By my own feelings, madam," replied Mr. Jones.

"Oh! is that all? Ah, Mr. Jones! you sadly over-estimate me; I'm quite hurt you should do so—John, the tray!—you and I, our fate is similar, both *have* known happiness! You don't think Sir Tufton has any notion of placing young Sir Edmund Lawson Wentworth in your academy? Why that ominous shake of the head? It wouldn't do, would it, on account of what happened at the Derby assizes? You are right, indeed you are! to keep the morals of your house extremely select. 'Tis a delightful establishment! such

a dear set of happy little fellows—ah, so ruddy and clean!—and the very first instruction!”

“I am gratified,” exclaimed Mr. Jones, moving towards the roasted-apples.

“When you have your new terms printed,” said Mrs. Meadows, sugaring the apples well, “remember me in your circulars. It’s a privilege to parents to have children to send to such a school. (I’ve diverted the attack,” thought the clever tactician.)

“You’re fond of children, madam? at least I have a notion to that effect.”

“Remarkably; but not the care of them. Indeed, I am resolved I never will have that. I love them dearly; but not in the same house with me. They affect my nerves. People who have suffered much, Mr. Jones, are poor creatures as to nerves.”

Mr. Jones looked disappointed and concerned. “I did fancy that having had the care and tuition of young gentlemen,”—he began.

“—Makes you resolved never to go through the same again! What I suffered at the Dean of ——’s, a remarkably nice family, where I was quite at home for two years,—shewed me the nature of boys. The first day I went I was requested to stoop down to be made

leap-frog of; twice I was run after with a red-hot poker. I couldn't walk out in my best bonnet, but I was sure to have the contents of a watering-pan poured down over me from a window. Poor dear fellows! I bore it till my darling, Harry Beauchamp, burnt off his right hand with having fireworks up his sleeve."

"On the 5th of November! 'Tis a thing I have put a stop to," cried Mr. Jones, eagerly.

"Oh, but they will have them! Mischief to boys is like water to ducks—their element. Bless your soul! the Dean never fretted, or played a rubber the less when Harry was ill. He has been remarkably fortunate with his sons, in putting them out in the world. Two are in India; one sailing round the world. Johnny's in the army, fighting somewhere. The Dean won't be troubled with them much more."

"But your affectionate disposition wouldn't suffer you to wish any family to whom *you* connected yourself to be severed from the parent stem, Mrs. Meadows?"

"Not if the parent stem can hold them! Mr. Jones. Dear sir! positively, 'tis half an hour to ten o'clock. I turn you out at ten, that you know! It doesn't do for a woman situated as myself to brave the eyes of the village, Mr. Jones."

“Not for worlds! And—also—my poor Nelly had the tooth-ache, and I was to take some depilatory of Spain—poor little maid! You know my little Nelly, don’t you?”

“I think girls more troublesome than boys; and you know my opinion of boys. By-the-bye, I wonder you don’t marry again, Mr. Jones! I often wonder *you* don’t marry again. There’s an uncommon pretty girl, a niece of Mrs. Brooksbank’s, who has been brought up so usefully—I don’t know such another girl.—John! Mr. Jones’s golashes! Mind the step, my dear sir, as you descend. As the father of a family you must take care of yourself. Your dear little Nelly will be better to-morrow, I know. It’s a sad anxious charge for you—think of my advice.”

“You’re very kind. So, I’ve been having a new usher for my boys, to give me my evenings to myself—all for this! I suppose I have no chance. She’s very good to recommend me to look at Mrs. Brooksbank’s niece—one of the thirteen who would be all living at my house; I dare say expected to take the brothers for nothing. Better have little Nelly’s tooth out at once,” thought the disappointed widower, as he walked home.

It was now six months, minus a fortnight,

since Mrs. Meadows had become a widow. She had expressed her determination, on the first burst of her grief, to wear her weeds for two years; but on hearing that, decidedly, soap and other grocery had gone up to Tufton Court—that the windows were being cleaned, and the bed-hangings sent to the wash, Mrs. Meadows began to have reveries of goffered ruffs, and of lavender and black ribbons.

“I’m really a sight!” she remarked to her *modiste*; “and what I’m afraid of is, my own friends won’t know me again. Whoever invented widows’-caps? I think it must have been a man who didn’t wish his wife to marry again—he could not have expected young widows to wear them long. I wouldn’t show disrespect to dear Mr. Meadows’ memory if you’d offer me a crown; but do you think one morsel of white love-ribbon—just one knot, here?”—“What do they mean by calling it *love-ribbon*?” thought Louisa, standing before the glass. “The first change after deep mourning is to love-ribbon. I can’t understand it. I cannot endure this incessant black crape. It always puts me in mind of ‘Young’s Night Thoughts,’ and ‘Blair’s Grave.’ Good heavens! The door-bell! How soon he’s come! How eager he is!—Sir Tufton Tyrawley!

You don't say so, Betty! I'm sure he's the last man I expected to call here.—Ah, Sir Tufton! you'll not know me! I've been persecuted out of my weeds; yet still you see the mourning garb. I shall never leave it off!"

"Prodigiously becoming! Mrs. Meadows. I've a passion for black!"

"You surprise me! But it is my own taste. Always so quiet a taste, as my husband used to say. Simplicity simplified. Good news, I hope, from my poor darling, dearest Adeline? and poor Mrs. Lawson Wentworth?"

"Mrs. Wentworth—we've thought it as well to drop the first name—that was an awkward piece of business; but things generally settle themselves—Millicent is very comfortable."

"Is she, indeed? Well, if she is, I don't know who might not be—and that darling, dear, noble-minded, superior boy? You are guardian to him, I hear; and he's a tremendous pet, I understand."

"He is!—the delight of us all! I am ashamed of liking the fellow so much," replied Sir Tufton, the tears almost coming into his eyes.—"I am quite ashamed of myself."

“Don't be ashamed, don't, for you're just like myself. I adore boys! darling, spirited creatures! I shouldn't mind having a house full.”

“It's very amiable and kind. But you are particularly amiable, Mrs. Meadows; every one says so. Woodcote's in preparation, you hear, for Mrs. Floyer. I can't get poor Millicent here. She prefers the south of England.”

“Very natural, very natural”—(hope she'll stay there, thought Louisa,) —“for,” pursued the widow aloud “she of course must find, if she returns, that she has lost consequence: not but that the poisoning of a baronet is a very different sort of affair to the murder of a ploughman, or a carter: *that* is disgraceful, indeed; but there are some persons so stupid that they won't see things in the right point of view at all.”

“I am not in the least afraid,” replied Sir Tufton, coolly, and with a dash of *hauteur* in his manner, “of any of our family losing—as the French phrase has it—*caste*.” French phrases were not common in those days; and Sir Tufton, fancying that his auditor might not comprehend him, added, “I mean, condition—consideration. Besides, Mrs. Went-

worth's character," he continued, his colour rising, "has gained an accession of respect and regard from her admirable conduct in the prison to that unfortunate husband of hers, who made such — such a spectacle of himself."

"She is, indeed, a sweet sufferer, Sir Tufton! Happy would it be if Mrs. Lawson — bless me! I mean to say Mrs. Wentworth, could forget Mr. Lawson; but that, in my opinion, she never will. She never will, with her past experience, venture upon matrimony again; — not that such a circumstance could happen to a woman twice in her life."

"Millicent," answered Sir Tufton, quickly, "is wonderfully recovered in spirits; but as to her marrying again," he added, in a low tone of voice, "between you and me — no gentleman could ever ally himself with the widow of — a felon! Poor Millicent!" and Sir Tufton sighed deeply as he pronounced her name.

"Impossible! Impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Meadows, eagerly; "no gentleman of old family, landed estates, high character, could injure himself so much; and yet there are people, Sir Tufton, who would descend to—"

"Mrs. Wentworth would not descend to unite herself to such people, my good Madam!" exclaimed Sir Tufton, with warmth. — "You've

a pleasant place here," he observed a moment afterwards, as if to break off from the subject of discourse.

"A sweet spot! Sir Tufton. See, we can just catch a glimpse of your purple beeches! those dear, ancestral trees. I love a purple beech; it is not a common tree!"

"And do you mean to stay here? Mrs. Milli—, I mean Mrs. Meadows."

"How pointed! how particular!" thought Louisa. "Why, indeed Sir Tufton, it is my place; the former residence of a most devoted husband. And while my spirits are low—"

"That is the very reason why you should change the scene; and if I can be of any use to you during your absence from home—"

"—A blind," thought Louisa. "A thousand thanks, dear Sir Tufton! But I cannot tear myself away just yet. If you would, indeed, now and then give your advice to a poor lone widow—I am often sadly perplexed."

"Indeed!—send to me at any time," said Sir Tufton, moving to depart. "I am just going now to walk up to Woodcote Grange, to see that the pictures have been carefully unpacked.—Good morning."

He went away looking about, and around, as he walked to the gate, upon the neat offices,

well-swept lawn, and many little comforts of the Grove. "A very nice place for an attorney's widow!" was the baronet's exclamation, as he walked into the road.

What Sir Tufton's meditations were, does not appear; but they were soon interrupted, as he turned into the Woodcote Lane, by a voice from behind him, and looking back, he saw Mr. Eustace Floyer coming towards him.

"So you are here? And when did you arrive at Woodcote?" was the baronet's greeting.

"Last night; I merely wish to see that all things are comfortably arranged to Adeline's wishes, as far as I understand them. Will you not walk on?"

"I was thinking," replied Sir Tufton, who was leaning on a gate which opened from the lane into a bean-field, "that it is just three years since I, hereabouts, saw Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, 'the flower of the grove,' as she was then called. She was walking with a simpleton of a fellow, Gadsden, the curate of my parish. Poor Mrs. Floyer! It was in danger that I first met her; and she has been in peril or grief of some sort ever since. She will be happy here, I hope."

The baronet walked on, as he spoke; at

last, the two gentlemen came in sight of an angle of Woodcote.

"A nice place — a very nice place," said the baronet; "but how is it, Floyer, that the place is not yours? It was so by purchase, as I once understood."

There was no reply to this question, and the interrogatory was repeated.

"—To prevent the old house from falling into the hands of strangers," said Mr. Floyer, "it was bought for me, and at my request, by my guardian. Stanhope was not then married, nor did I know of his engagement. Upon his marriage this estate was settled on his wife during her lifetime."

"Very handsome conduct! (white and red by turns, I see,) and pray, is it true that on this condition only old Meadows consented to the marriage?"

"The workmen have not finished yet, I perceive," was Eustace's observation; and Sir Tufton's second question remained unanswered.

The two gentlemen passed into the hall. It had been renovated, not altered; baskets of exquisite flowers in bloom stood in the deep oriel windows, and Eustace was presently busied amongst these; propping up some, sending away others, having various choice ones in-

serted, and all with the assiduity, the particularity, and impatience of — love! for friendship deals in generals; it is the lover alone who dwells upon trifles,—dear, inexpressibly dear to the heart.

“Do you like this room?” asked Eustace, anxiously, as Sir Tufton strutted into the drawing-room.

The ancient portraits and pictures had been here restored to their former places. The room bore the same antiquated aspect as formerly, but it was antiquity embellished by cleanliness and care, not the antiquity of cobwebs and dry-rot; not the antiquity of the tumble-down school, nor yet the furbelowed and spurious antiquity of Strawberry Hill,—of Pratt and Emanuel; there was no gew-gaw, all was in keeping; the large latticed windows were not converted into sashes; the old fire-places were not blocked up, and fitted with modern stoves; there were no modern portraits in the room, not even a Hopner or Cosway, not even a short-waisted resemblance of the beautiful Adeline Floyer, filling up a crevice next to some full-wigged lawyer or planted opposite to some stern puritan.

Mr. Floyer inspected all with a minuteness and fastidiousness that almost exhausted the

patience of Sir Tufton, who was one of that very tiresome race, a judge of pictures. Mr. Floyer interrupted a reverie before a Velasquez, to summon the baronet into an inner room.

It was that secluded apartment in which, some years ago, Stanhope Floyer had arranged, as it was called, his affairs with his creditors; that is, in which he had been left penniless, and they paid. Since the unfortunate debtor had been seated before the table, which still stood in the centre of the room, what scenes of profligacy had he not witnessed? into what sins had he not been tempted?—and now, where and how wandered his spirit, into what regions of condemnation or of preparation?

But Eustace and Sir Tufton thought little of him; they were at first busily-engaged in opening the windows into a cloister filled with rare exotics, beyond which a fair garden in *parterres* stretched as far as the sunken fence, which divided the pleasure-grounds from the woods.

“She will like this room, I am sure she will,” said Eustace. As he spoke his eye fell upon a small picture of his unhappy cousin, of him who had formerly tenanted that room. Eustace started—and his colour mounted up into his face. A sense of something like con-

scious guilt produced that flush; there is something reproachful, even in the silent looks of the dead, when they gaze on us from the canvass; and when we are conscious that we wish to supplant them in the affections of the living.

The picture was placed against the back of the chair; Eustace, after a moment's reflection, hung it up.

"Send it up to the gallery," said Sir Tuf-ton, who watched the proceeding; "it is best for such men as Stanhope to be forgotten."

"But he is *not* forgotten!" replied Eustace, in a tone almost of bitterness; and without bestowing another look upon the portrait, he moved into the garden.

Here there had been much done; everything for comfort, something, even in the kitchen-garden, for ornament. As Eustace was diverging towards the gate of the latter, he could not but be reminded how incessantly, when one wishes to forget an individual, the cruel fates seem to take pleasure in bringing him to remembrance. An eagle, which Stanhope Floyer had, in his boyish days, taken an equal pleasure in tormenting and in cherishing, stood so still as sometimes, in the gloom, to be mistaken for stone, chained as it was

to a stake on the opposite brink of the sunk fence, beyond a tier of greenhouse plants, whilst his home was backed by a thick foliage of forest-trees. The proud bird stood motionless as Eustace passed, looking resentfully at the intruder, and forming a stern accompaniment to the old and secluded character of the house, of which he was a vassal.

Farther on was an open space, redeemed from the woods, and used for an archery-ground in Stanhope's time. The butts were mouldering away, and the targets, which had been left carelessly under a tree, were mildewed: Eustace, in a grave tone, turned to one of the gardeners, and bade him repair and replace what had been neglected,—“and restore it as it was in the time of your former master.”

“Yes, master and Mrs. Stanhope Floyer used to take great delight in shooting, the few days they ever were here together,” said the man, unconscious that he was inflicting a pang.

Eustace walked quietly into the kitchen-garden. It was one of those old-fashioned compartments, garden within garden, strongly fenced round with espaliers, concealing the vegetables, and adorned with grass walks, skirted by flowers, so that, when one chose to pilfer, or ask for an apple, or eat one's own

property, whichever it might be, the eye was feasted with lilies, rich tulips, or fragrant roses ; and conversation was not checked by the inelegant sight of a bed of onions, or the melancholy aspect of some decaying cabbages.

To keep up the character of the Grange, there was a farm beyond the garden-wall ; and Adeline had always been fond—as fine ladies sometimes are, by way of contrast, I suppose,—of going into the farm-house, of inspecting the dairy, nay, I believe she even sometimes mounted into the cheese-room, or went round the farm-yard to look at the calves :—farming men are always so proud of their calves. But Eustace had a motive a degree higher. He went to see Sally, who was now dairy-woman, and with whom, even the intellectual and accomplished Mr. Floyer took a pleasure in talking about what was nearest to both their hearts—the comfort of Mrs. Stanhope Floyer.

“ Ah, sir !” said Sally, as she took off a blue apron and put on a white one, “ she ’ll never be happy nowhere but at Woodcote ; it’s her bridal home, as I may say, and it will be like her wedding-day over again when she comes here. She ’ll never marry again—no, not she ! she’s far too fond of him that’s

gone, for that,— poor thing ! Do you think he was really drowned, sir ?”

Eustace attempted to give her satisfaction on this point in the briefest way possible.

“Jarsey ! that’s down beyond seas, somewhere. I’ve seed it mentioned in the newspaper. There’s no way of going to it over land, I suppose, sir ?—else it war a pity he didn’t, even if the expense war greater. How she took on that first time as master broke it all off, and wouldn’t let her write them long letters as her used to do !—She’d cry ! and as to eating, it war a joke the breakfast I used to take her up in her own room, when master was angry with her, and she wouldn’t go down. It was a pity she didn’t like Sir Tufton—he’d ha’ been quite the sweetheart for her,—I think as how —”

This was altogether too much ; and before the good old body had resumed her remarks, Eustace had plunged into the woods beyond the farm, startled the broods of pheasants, and dashed down into the road which led to the Hill House.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS.

VOL. III.

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W I D O W S
AND
W I D O W E R S.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

BY
MRS. THOMSON,
AUTHORESS OF "CONSTANCE," "ANNE BOLEYN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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1842.



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WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS,

CHAPTER I.

The world is a beautiful garden,
Enrich'd with the pleasures of life.

RITSON'S *Songs*.

Two years must be supposed to have elapsed since the trial, and death of Lawson. Two years! what a chronicle of weal and woe might be spun out of such a portion of man's existence!

Time had not stood still with any of my *dramatis personæ*: some were renovated; some were impaired: Sir Tufton's whiskers were now wholly white; Mrs. Meadows, on the other hand, had a new row of teeth, and a few additional ringlets; Mr. Gadsden was grown delicate, and wore goloshes: Loftus Meadows had a tribe of children. Mr. Jones's school was on the increase.

Such were some of the vicissitudes of fortune. Among other events, the death of Lady Theodora had occurred. Her sensitive mind had worn out a feeble body. Every one thought that Lady Wentworth ought to die; but every one thought wrong. She throve upon the cheerful monotony of Bath, where she took precedence among the dowagers. Night after night, with a gloomy anxious countenance, she fathomed the depth of a pool of quadrille, playing with eagerness, winning greedily, losing impatiently; her restless manner, her dread of any interruption of the game, showing the uneasy heat within her. Isolated and joyless old age! uncheered by the companionship of the young, unhallowed by the offices of charity or by the aspirations of religion, but fretted by the angry passions which, like demons, wait upon the card-table; and soothed physically by laudanum, and by drams, and mentally, by flattery and subserviency. Gradually, life waned away; and perhaps there is not a more mournful sight than a hardened, worldly, impenitent woman, consuming the hours which are allowed to her in mercy, in living as if there were neither death nor judgment.

Let us turn to a brighter picture; the

chastened, the humbled, the now happy aspirant for immortal peace. Still young, very gentle and good, very beautiful, without one spark of spiritual pride, without one atom of self-righteousness, Adeline Floyer passed her days in that actual, practical, cheering piety which is doubtless the most acceptable to Him who requires an account of us. Employment, reflection, submission, had brought her back not only to resignation and composure, but to enjoyment. The real mourner mourns long, but not incessantly. The same feelings which deepen grief enhance the kindly interest which is extended to others. Beloved and courted, easy in circumstances, without the curse of self-reproach, Adeline was now more interesting, more companionable, far more elegant and lovely, than even in the days of her youth. Her mind was developed by self-culture; her notions were enlarged by good society; her manners were polished by an occasional, though not a very frequent intercourse with that superior class into which her position, as the widow of a gentleman of old descent had first introduced her, and in which her own qualities had rendered her welcome.

One morning, whilst yet the thrill of

the nightingale was heard in the woods, and before the tufts of cowslips had disappeared from the fields, before the roses had burst into their mass of bloom, yet, when a luxurious warmth induced rest, rather than fatigue, two persons, a gentleman and lady, were seated on the lawn before Woodcote. Let me draw the portrait of the former as he there sat.

The gentleman was in the very prime of manhood, about five or six and twenty, just at that period of life when the bloom of youth begins to mellow into the stronger expressions of a matured intellect and strength. Dignity now began to accompany the graceful activity of a tall elastic form; an acute, as well as a thoughtful mind was betrayed in those deep blue eyes, overhung with dark eyelashes, which the young and handsome man fixed upon his companion. There was the bearing of a man of the world, at ease—though possessed by one strong feeling;—there were the polish, and readiness, and propriety which give such an infinite charm to men of the higher orders in this country, and which are so painfully missed when the descent is made from the altitudes into the dull plains of common-place existence.

Men well born, and in good circumstances, have such various opportunities of moulding themselves into the most fascinating companions, if not into the most useful members of society. They have access to noble libraries, they are in daily familiarity with exquisite pictures; they look from their windows upon what is fair, and noble in landscape; or, if in London, their taste may be elevated by a communion with the highest order of intellect. Their childhood is generally passed among objects of historical interest, or in scenes of picturesque beauty. Then those old colleges, to which ere the associations of home are destroyed, they repair: how stately in exterior, how fastidiously preserved; what pictures, what halls, what chapels, what men who move about in those aisles and quadrangles in a peculiar garb, associated in our thoughts with clerical dignity, and with learning and purity! From such scenes and companions men of condition issue into the world,—to travel, to see, to learn, to admire, and, if they have only gathered up the weeds which sprang up in their young haunts, if they have driven coaches when they might have bestrode Arabians fleet and graceful, if they have smoked, and drunk, and sunk into the lowest of all things, degraded aris-

ocracy, it is not the fault of their station, which promises and offers all that is fair, noble, and,—if they choose to make it so,—excellent.

He, whose features I would fain delineate, and whose manners I seek to portray, had availed himself of all those advantages of which I speak. He had loved the student's life; he had loved it perhaps too well. For often, in the turmoil of an ambitious career, he had looked back upon the green enclosure of those cool quadrangles where he had lived, before reflection had given place to action, before men had come forth to view in their true colours with a something of regret:—he had visited those fair and ancient courts with the fond affection of a lover separated from an early love. All that passed in those conventual halls was dear to him;—the progress of some,—the decline of others; the honours which were bestowed,—the honours which science achieved, were, in the turmoil of a political career, themes of a pleasant interest to him, who had not sought in vain the delights of academical success.

He, or, to speak in proper phrase, Eustace Floyer, had come forth into public life the representative of an old family, the natural and, as it was then deemed, the rightful occu-

pant of an hereditary seat in the Commons; prepared by diligent study, and qualified by powerful talents for the business of life, he had brought into the service of his country high-mindedness and zeal, energy and intrepidity. Circumstances, over which he had no control, had accelerated his success; already might the comprehensive word *fame* be uttered and applied to him, and whilst he won golden opinions, his mind had been strengthened and matured; experience, the safeguard of the prosperous, had been added to right intention; as a public man he had been eminently happy. Touching his private condition, let him speak for himself.

“We have so long looked upon each other only as the most intimate of friends; we have so long been regarded by every one almost in the light of brother and sister,”—thus spoke the most musical of voices,—“that I know it will seem strange to you,—I fear, repulsive, to learn that I have for years,”—he stopped, but in answer to a slight movement as he fancied, of inquiry, to an almost imperceptible turn of the head, on the part of Adeline, Eustace went on,—“ventured to love you. Yes, Adeline,” he added impetuously, “I loved you almost before you knew me; I loved you

when youth was my best guarantee for sincerity, before I knew the world,—whilst hope was high, and when, if any one had pointed out to me the disappointment, the anguish of heart—but I forbear,—let us think upon that period no more.”

“I fear, indeed I do,” said Adeline, rising, and putting back the branches of the weeping ash which hung over the seat on which she had been resting, “that you mistake the sentiments of regard and partiality, the interest of a faithful friend, for love. Forgive me, I cannot enter upon this subject now. I am afraid of losing a true and dear friend, whose advice has been inexpressibly valuable to me,—without whose kindness I should not have existed. Let us not speak of love.”

She passed out into the garden; and Eustace followed her into the enclosure of a vast walled kitchen-garden, with grass walks, and so arranged that there could be nothing displeasing to the view. Espalier fruit-trees were planted all around the borders, so that those familiar objects, rows of peas, and beds of asparagus, were shaded from observation by the apple-blossom and its accompanying leaves.

“Let us be content,” resumed Adeline, as

she opened a door at the extremity of one of those gardens beyond gardens, which one finds in old houses,—“with each other’s society and regard.” They emerged into the park.

“I should not dare, Eustace,” she added, as she led the way through a wood of beeches, “to enter into an engagement. My first was ill-omened, and whenever it has been hinted to me in jest,—whenever the thought has crossed my mind, that such an event could possibly occur again, I have shrunk from the idea as from a scheme of guilt — those visions of which I have spoken to you, return. I cannot dispel the presentiment of evil, the dread I have of danger to myself, and to others, in forming a fresh tie, even where I could love.”

“My case is very unhappy,—it is cruel,” cried Eustace bitterly.

“Do not reproach me; I sufficiently reproach myself that I have too often, too keenly enjoyed the society on which I have been dependent for happiness;—but if I had known, Eustace, that you had been attached to me even before I was married, that you had made such sacrifices for my happiness, I would never have acted in so selfish and inconsiderate a manner.”

They came upon a scene of picturesque

beauty at this instant ; a neglected and disused lime-pit, situated in this unfrequented part of the park ; beyond was seen a champaign country, the smoke of distant farm-houses rising in the blue sky. The shelving sides of the lime-pit were shadowed with self-sown sycamores, casting their flickering shades upon the pure and dazzling white ; at the bottom was a dilapidated shed, a broken cart, some tools forgotten and left there. It had never been worked in the time of the late owner of Woodcote, although the produce of the pit was well worth trouble and expense.

It was a common object with Adeline to stroll with Eustace to the lime-pit, and thence he often quitted the park, and walked back to a friend's house, where he was staying.

The two relatives walked on to the point where they usually separated ; then Adeline extended her hand. As Eustace pressed it he perceived that she trembled. Hopes, dearer to him than existence, rushed into his heart ; but, with the delicacy of a pure and gentlemanly character, he did not express them. He trusted to the future, and he felt that every sacrifice of present feeling was slight, to secure the prospect on which his imagination had long fed.

“Adieu!” said Adeline turning from the speaking gaze, which required no aid of words; “to-morrow let us meet as if nothing had passed between us.”

She withdrew her hand, and walked hastily away. Certain emotions, which she had felt almost beyond control, had nearly betrayed themselves whilst she stood with her hand in that of Eustace. To know that so noble a heart was devoted to her, to be able to confide so entirely in its honest affection, imparted a momentary, an exquisite sense of bliss. He, the unsullied, the extolled, the respected and admired, laid at her feet the homage of a strong mind, and of a first affection. She read her influence over him; a sentiment of pride in herself,—lofty aspirations,—a feeling of being raised above her fellow mortals possessed her. She loitered by the chalk-pit, musing upon the last half hour, and, in spite of her resistance of such thoughts, the present became mingled up with the future.

She was aroused from her reverie by a shadow so quickly passing near her that ere she caught a glance of it, it was gone. This part of the park was skirted by forest-trees; and by a path which passed underneath their umbrageous boughs, Adeline was going to

return; but as she looked towards the thicket on her right hand she was transfixed to the spot; a figure was seen suddenly to cross the grass, not far from her, and to plunge into the dense shade of the woods. A man, young, slight, agile, turned for an instant his face, and then disappeared.

How did Adeline comport herself? she gasped, she tottered;—then, with a sudden effort she sprung forward, and darting through the wood, she gained the lawn, and fainting, was received in the arms of one of her female servants, who had come to seek her.

On her recovery Adeline sent for her principal and confidential male domestic, and charged him instantly, though secretly, to search all the woods around Woodcote, to send to the village, to inquire who had of late passed through there, to make strict investigations if any one,—if any one bearing a strong resemblance to the late Mr. Stanhope Floyer had been seen about the place.

The man left her, and Adeline fell upon her knees. She believed the vision which she had seen to be an interposition of mercy to save her from guilt. She knew not how else to interpret it. Yet could it be, even supposing that the story of his death were false,

her lost, her unfortunate husband? would he have fled from her? Alas! she knew not. The history of his career of error might be such that he dared not to reappear. She had no stable principles to rest upon. Why had he quitted her as he did? She harassed herself with conjectures, and the serenity, the "dumb forgetfulness," which time had produced were at an end. Conversations, long since held, were recalled,—circumstances were reviewed; and to what purpose? For no trace of him whom a heated imagination had perhaps pictured, could be discovered. Not a soul had seen a figure emerge from the wood into the park,—the wood-cutter had been felling some trees, he must have observed any one who passed. The woman at the lodge had kept the gate locked; it had not been disturbed. Whence could he have come? Where could he have issued? Common sense asked these questions, and Adeline was forced to conceal her visions, if she could not disbelieve them.

CHAPTER II.

Man may at first transgress, but next do well ;
Vice doth in some but lodge awhile, not dwell.

HERNICK.

It was Sunday ; the sermon bell, as it is still called in country places, had rung, and the village folks were hastening into church. There was Mrs. Meadows, in a new pelisse

where huge ropes denoted that she was just in the belfry.

The farmers' daughters, gay as tulips, congregating on the bench beside the church, had scarcely time to hurry into church before Mr. Gadsden, with a woollen handkerchief drawn over his mouth, warm gloves over his delicate grey kid, and an umbrella in his hand, stopped to say a few things to the widow of Woodcote, to make her, as he thought, happy for the day. "I have repented but once, and that is for ever," was Mr. Gadsden's confidential confession to his friend, Mr. Bernal, senior usher of the Free School at Northington, "that I disappointed poor Miss Meadows, now Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, poor girl, just at the critical moment." Perhaps it might be Mr. Gadsden's intention to make up for his ill conduct; for he was unremitting in his visits to Woodcote. One day he called to inquire whether Mrs. Stanhope Floyer had taken cold on the previous Sunday, and to claim a little sympathy for his own hoarseness; another morning he stepped in just to recommend the Tolu lozenges, which he had, thank heaven, found very beneficial; and now he stopped in the porch to warn Mrs. Floyer that the stove was not to be lighted

to-day, and to regret that she had not taken the precaution he had, which was "to put on a pair of warm gaiters, and to double his wraps."

The last parting caution to Mrs. Floyer was uttered, the last injunction to the purblind old clerk to shut the doors fast was given, when a smart family coach, with the arms fully emblazoned under mantles, on each door, drew up to the gate of the churchyard. There was a father and mother, and two young ladies;—the history of the former might be read at a glance. The gentleman was large, heavy, mild, and sleepy; the lady was short and sharp, with a remarkable air of self-possession and determination. It was an old story; the worthy man was the worser half; scarcely to be called even by so respectable a name as a half, for after the mother, there stepped forth two daughters, large dark-eyed, well-featured young women, with a tread as if they despised the lowly tenants of the silent graves, and did religion an honour by attending one of her temples.

"Do you think they'll find us seats?" asked the gentleman deferentially, as the wife and daughters proceeded at a strapping pace towards the porch.

“To be sure, papa; they know who we are, of course,” answered the youngest daughter impatiently.

“Dear me! we can sit anywhere,—in the aisle,—if they don’t choose to be civil,” said the elder daughter, with more good humour.

“At any rate we shall have done the right thing in coming,” observed the mother, looking back. “They’ve begun I suppose—Heavens! let us wait till those charity children have done their Psalm-singing,—their *charity*, and *fugitive*. Is the man that preaches here the same queer little thing that comes round to ask for our subscriptions for coals and blankets. It puts one in a fever to think of them.”

“My dear Harriot,” said the gentleman, “we *must* go in now.” As he spoke the door was deferentially opened, and Lady Hippisley, for so was she called, and her daughters, strode into the church.

There was a row of old men, fast asleep under the gallery, who woke up at their approach;—the whole of Mr. Jones’s school were put into a flutter; three of the Miss Brooksbanks were reprimanded by their mamma for permitting themselves to rise up on the hassocks; the clerk descended from his desk to

open a pew-door, and could scarcely return in time to say "Amen." Mr. Gadsden was observed to utter the word iniquity instead of equity : all the charity children misbehaved.

Two footmen had followed Lady Hippisley into the aisle, and it was amusing to see these personages taking up the skirts of their laced coats as they sat down on the benches, as if they were afraid of being contaminated by the smock-frocks and corduroy buskins. Like other worldly persons, they little thought of what was passing within those honest hearts, covered by serge and calimancoes, nor knew that were the secrets of the future ever disclosed, they would sink low, — those poor, and simple petitioners would rise above them at the great account.

"Well, 'tis done—and now we've been to church, the people will call, I suppose," said Lady Hippisley to her daughters as they joined the throng who poured out of church. "This sort of thing is necessary, I believe ; but what a fatigue ! A woman churched too, in the midst of all. I wonder those obsolete ceremonies, which mean nothing, are not done away with. Who is that uncommonly pretty woman, walking with that very common looking sort of person ?"—(poor Louisa in her new

Jonquil)—“ Indeed ! Mrs. Stanhope Floyer ! 'tis fortunate one *can* know her ; and as Mr. Floyer's relation—”

Lady Hippisley was here stopped by her two footmen offering their arms to assist her to her carriage.

“ What a parade ! ” said Mrs. Meadows, looking back, ere she turned the corner down to the grove. “ What a fuss ! Why, my dear, she was a banker's daughter, as you may know by her way of walking over you, as one may say. He, you know, was our dear Eustace Floyer's guardian. Sir Fanny, they call him. She is Sir Francis. I declare I don't think the Miss Hippisleys' dresses half so new as mine ; and what frights of hats ! I remember them all very small people indeed, living very plain, before he came to his title, and she with one nurse-maid, sewing shirts. Then her father died, and he got a handle to his name, Poor man ! he daren't say his life's his own.”

Mrs. Stanhope Floyer always took an early dinner between services with her mother-in-law, and found a pleasure in this primeval custom. It reminded her of her father,—and the recollection had now nothing of bitterness. She had no self-reproach to embitter her regrets ; and the quiet one o'clock repast,

waited upon by clean maid-servants, with their Sunday ribbons, recalled the image of Mr. Meadows in his happiest moments ; she sometimes fancied almost that he was sitting at the bottom of the table still.

“ I ’ve no notion of the pride of those people,” pursued Louisa, as she followed her step-daughter into the cool, clean dining-room, where covers for two were set. “ They ’ll be made to eat humble pie some day,—for he’s still in the Bank. You know the report about our dear guardian, as I call him, and the youngest Annabella ? ”

“ I never heard it,” replied Adeline, colouring a little.

Mrs. Meadows made her own observations, but passed none aloud upon the evident confusion of her step-daughter.

“ Sir Fanny, or rather Sir Francis, wished to have Mr. Floyer for a son-in-law ; and a very nice catch it would have been for Miss Bella. It was on this account that those people did all they could to estrange our beloved Eustace from his poor dear mother. You’re wondering where I get all my information, I dare say ? ”

“ No, I was not indeed.”

“ Why, my dear,—(a glass of wine, love,—sustain nature,—you must)—we don’t talk of

past times now, but when I was in my last situation but two, these two Hippisley girls came, with their governess, to stay with our children. There was plenty of fun going on, but we two maidens saw nothing of it, you may be sure. Had we been old and ugly, we might have been sent for to make out a country dance now and then, or to stand up in the College-Hornpipe;—but no, our school-room looked into the poultry-yard, and we had only the turkey cocks to make love to.”

“A strange contrast to your present happy position, Louisa;—so easy in your mind, — so cheerful in your temper,—so respected and liked,” said Adeline, whilst a kind, sweet smile played upon her beautiful countenance.

“Ah! my dear; then what a husband have I lost! so devoted to me! We were the happiest couple in existence! I often think of him, Adeline, when I look at those decanters; they were his favourite decanters; he was a sad sufferer! quite a martyr. It was a happy release. But, as I was going to observe, Miss Harris could not endure Lady Hippisley, but liked Sir Francis; just the same as myself, I never could bear the ladies, but always fancied the gentlemen,—and the attentions I’ve received—”

“ — Mr. Gadsden ! if you please, ma'am,” said the attendant Phillis at this moment.

“ Let him walk in,—just let me tell you, in a moment, my dearest, the end of the Hippisley story. Miss Bella was brought up to think she was to have Eustace Floyer, and that he must like her, all the world gave them to each other, so that the poor girl absolutely fancied herself in love with him before he proposed. What folly ! would *I* do so ? would *I* think of a man before he had thrown himself at least six times at my feet ? Mum.— Ah, Mr. Gadsden ! you're very poorly to-day, as I'm quite certain, for you hadn't your usual eloquence in the pulpit. You don't intend doing afternoon duty ? 'tis quite too much for you ; though no one can supply your place. You'll eat something ?”

“ Thank you ; I never touch veal or beef ; mutton, when warm, overcomes me ; lamb unhappily, is getting out of season. I've very little appetite.” The curate looked at both the ladies for sympathy. “ My good lady makes me all sorts of broths and jellies. And there's Mrs. Haines,—in spite of that painful circumstance of your sister-in-law, Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, who so thoroughly misunderstood my meaning, for I never had any thoughts

of her, — Mrs. Haines is so uncommonly good. She had some tamarinds put by for me in the vestry to-day. Some people say that tamarinds are indigestible, what is your opinion, Mrs. Stanhope? I should be very much guided by your opinion.”

“Mrs. Haines has three other daughters besides Mrs. Loftus,” said Mrs. Meadows expressively; “and they don’t go off well; and every one knows, Mr. Gadsden, you’ve a pretty little independence besides your curacy; so I advise you,—take care of you rself.”

Mr. Gadsden returned the expressive look with equal expression, coloured, looked up and down, and to relieve himself from excessive embarrassment, he actually began to joke Mrs. Meadows about Mr. Jones.

“Mr. Jones never can nor will be anything to me,” cried the widow indignantly. “I never could parade all those boys to church. Pray Mr. Gadsden, let all this raillery cease, if you please.” She rose with dignity, and the church bell at this instant sounding, Mr. Gadsden, after some ten minutes preparation, in resuming his spencer, golashes, comforter, warm gloves, and umbrella, departed, for fear of remarks, before the ladies had issued forth.

What a picture of simple happiness is

presented by the dispersing of a country congregation after church. The smock-frocks and red cloaks, collecting in little groups among the tomb-stones, and, after a snug parley, hieing home to their cheerful tea: the children of the Sunday-school, bounding over the glebe meadows, released and free; the farmer, who can only come once a-day, remounting his tax cart, with his gay, pretty daughters by his side; the gardener tribe, each in a well preserved best suit, scarcely recognizable to those who see them every day, trudging homewards with perhaps a child on one shoulder, a little one in the other hand; — then the servants of neighbouring families, all so trigg and clean, some, point-device, and, whatever may be their usual habits, all, in the house of God, serious and respectful:—they, in my opinion, add to the comfortable, prosperous character of the scene. But then I am partial to the menial race, — a spoiler in theory, at all events, — for in some of them I have found attachment in hours of sickness and sorrow, fidelity in trouble, patience under their own afflictions.

The crowds have dispersed; the clerk, sable-suited and slow, had folded away the surplice and locked the church-door, but whilst

his hand yet turned the key, the good man was startled by a person brushing by, and mounting on the top of the highest grave to look, if possible, into the lane turning to Woodcote. Old Ralph, as the clerk was called, saw a gentleman suddenly retreating as if fearful of being observed,—not the stranger's face, nor noted,—what cause had he to note?—which way the stranger went.

Adeline meantime walked slowly towards her home, followed by no other companion but her dog. She had not had courage to relate to Mrs. Meadows the vision, as she deemed it, that she had seen; she dreaded the conjectures, the recollections, the conclusions—which are revived and arranged by sympathizing friends on extraordinary occasions. She believed, too, that she had been mistaken, that her imagination had misled her, — and she did not wish to mislead others. She was also aware, that in telling Mrs. Meadows of her perplexity it was as good as publishing it upon the house-top. She therefore thought the more of that embarrassing adventure, because she had talked the less.

It was in vain to conceal the present state of her feelings from herself. Two years of her widowhood had passed away.

During that period Adeline had been in habits of intimacy with a man of an exalted character, of vigorous and cultivated intellect, of amiable manners. She had experienced, from this gifted being all those delicate and unobtrusive kindnesses which win slowly the heart. She had learned, too, in her intercourse with the world to be proud of this faithful friend; it was scarcely possible not to have become attached to him. Gradually the conviction of his affection for herself had possessed her mind. Was it in human nature for a woman, young, enthusiastic, able to prize the high qualities of one who was devoted to her,—seeing none equal to him, knowing, too, that the blameless life of the admired Eustace Floyer was accompanied by no self-exaltation, was sullied by no display of self-righteousness, discovering at last that he had long loved her, though hopelessly, — was it in the nature of woman to be insensible to a homage so pure, a preference so honourable; or, if her mind took not so wide a scope, could she be proof against the daily, hourly fascinations which a well-bred man deeply in love can throw into his habitual conversation, nay, into every look, movement, action?

She had enjoyed,—and to the extent,—that

partial participation in the extended and accurate knowledge of man,—she had felt that indescribable pleasure in the communion with a superior being, than which society has nothing better to offer. Of late, however, she had enjoyed in trembling. As long as the attachment of Eustace was not disclosed,—whilst they were only friends, the doubts which she had ever, more or less, entertained concerning the alleged death of Stanhope Floyer, were dormant. They were now revived with a superstitious tremor, for which she could not account, and one of those mysterious instincts of danger, one of those presentiments of coming ill, which in the course of our probation here are sent, took away at times all sense of pleasure. They made happiness, to her distorted fancy, wear the visage of guilt.

And now she found the security of having placed her affections upon a man of principle, and not only of principle, but on one who was endowed with a just and a nice sense of what is right. Had she been placed in similar circumstances with Stanhope Floyer, what a combat she would have had to encounter with his headstrong will; what difficulties to dread from his uncontrolled passions; how

little reliance could she have placed upon his counsels. How doubly would she have dreaded her own weakness, when she knew that it was exceeded by that of her lover. But now she was secure,—she was aware that she had only to tread on the right path herself,—she would never be diverted from it by Eustace. Though her perplexity was great, she had not the double task of leading the rebellious spirit into its bondage, into the yoke which the events of life impose upon our wills. All that was weak she knew would be strengthened, not subdued, — all that was erroneous, affectionately, but firmly corrected. “For once,” she said, as she walked to her solitary home, “I have the happiness of uniting respect with

CHAPTER III.

Ask me no reason why I love you, for though love use reason for his precision, he admits him not for his counsellor.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

THERE was one pensive swain in Northington whose happiness was dear to the young ladies of debateable position; namely, to the teachers in the principal school,—to Miss Pugh of the circulating library, and to Miss Townshend of the Castle and Ladder. This was Mr. Bernal, of the Northington Free School, one of those spurious clergymen of the last century who were ordained without a college education at St. Bees; and who formed a *corps de reserve* for clergymen who seek cheap aides-de-camp, schoolmasters who wanted ushers, and young ladies who sighed for lovers.

“How the creaking of those shoes shake

my poor nerves," said Mr. Gadsden one evening to this his particular friend, who sat with him over a tea-table. "I must afford Tim a pair of list slippers."

"You will get them tolerable good at Hodson's," observed Mr. Bernal, stirring the fire.

"—By the by, my dear Bernal, I hope you gave those Darnfords no hopes that I would go over to their christening party. I can't stand it, indeed I can't,—they won't catch me there. All those spills you see are made of the notes Miss Emma has sent me,—that girl's miserable without any right to be so."

"Poor Miss Emma!"

"Poor! why would she come over to evening church here all the winter, when she knew I never could think of *her*? Don't defend her, dear Bernal, don't. I wish I could bear things stoically. I have had thoughts of leaving Northington these twenty times,—but then, where could I go?"

"—Miss Emma has a pretty property," quoth Bernal, taking the kettle off.

"Very well for a girl like her. Ah! I am rightly punished! I didn't act fair to—you know who I mean. I left her in suspense, and she went in a fit of pique, and threw

herself away on Mr. Stanhope Floyer. Now it's quite another thing ; then she was nobody, and I was somebody, now she's somebody, and I—it has very much injured my health, Bernal. Now don't joke me before the Haines's ; I can't bear being joked, you know I can't."

" But now 's your time to propose, Gadsden," said Bernal slyly.

" I am thinking of it,—but there are so many things to be done. I 'm driven half mad with the affairs of the parish : there 's the new school-mistress to come first, before I can relieve my mind,—there 's that piece of work to settle about the stone to Mr. Meadows in the chancel,—then I must write a letter, I suppose—and the extreme difficulty of getting anything like a good pen in this place. Besides, Bernal, I must alter my residence,—of course I must hint as much ; I must, though I have no house to take her to, hint at such a thing. I wish you would help me out of this affair,—I see no way of getting out of it. At any rate, set Miss Emma's mind right. Don't let me have her brother calling upon me to say, If it wasn't for my cloth, and all that,—I have had so much of it."

" I will settle that matter," replied Mr.

Bernal, shading his face from his friend's view with his hand.

“ I was a little polite to her at the Derby assizes, it is true. I gave her my place inside as we came back. I thought it my place to call and inquire after Miss Emma at Cabbington; but really, Bernal, I couldn't stand being received just as if I was to be son-in-law and brother-in-law all at once. Such jokes, and thumps upon the back by old Mr. Darnford,—such squeezes of the hand from the old maiden aunt, that keeps house for them all. Miss Emma might see that I purposely turned my head away from her last Sunday, as she walked down the aisle.”

“ I wasn't noticing,” said the St. Bees curate.

“—That bell again! I have changed my shoes, forgetting it; oh! I shall lose my voice again if I tread on those damp graves. Dear Bernal, will *you* read the Service for me to-night. 'Tis extremely provoking the poor creature didn't live till finer weather.”

“ What is it?” asked Bernal, buttoning on his great-coat;—“ a child, or a man, or a woman?”

“ It's one of the three,—let me see,—it's a lady, to be sure! I had forgot, and was

near behaving very rude. You won't do, Bernal, and I must take my chance about the damp grass,—if it had been a pauper funeral one might have been excused." Mr. Gadsden took out his accustomed paraphernalia as he spoke.

"It's that lady, now I remember, that came over from Wolstone in a chaise last week. Some say she was out of her mind. I was sent for one night to read to her, as old Huxley thought she was dying. I am sure I was not half an hour walking up, but when I got there she had taken her composing draught and wouldn't see me."

"She's composed enough now," said Bernal, his leaden face relaxing into a laugh.

"There's something strange about the story; it will be all over the place,—bless me, how that bell makes my head ache,—everything about poor me is so easily disturbed,—the name I'm told, is Neville. Good night,—I must run off. 'Tis lucky, Bernal, the church is so handy."

Through a driving rain, Mr. Gadsden hastened to the church. It was not actually dark, but at seven o'clock the shades of evening were increased by the lowering sky, and gusty winds, and the dismal aspect of the heavens, but too well corresponded with the dolorous

sounds of the deep funereal bell. A late hour had been chosen for the interment of a stranger—a traveller, as it was said, through Northington,—who had been suddenly attacked by illness, and struck down, like a blasted tree. And the old saying, where the tree falls let it lie, had been adhered to in this case;—the personal attendant on the lady, a female servant, had, after the delay of a day or two, ordered the funeral, and chosen a spot in which the remains of her mistress were to be deposited.

The wind whistled through the old porch, and nearly blew out the candles at the reading-desk, which were lighted, whilst—the covered coffin lying before him—Mr. Gadsden read trippingly the solemn service. The clerk,—the master of the Castle,—the servant of the deceased,—and the medical man stood near the coffin, being the sole attendants on the mortal remains of one who had once been gay, and courted, and, perhaps, beloved. The coffin was carried behind torches to the grave, and in a few minutes more, the sound of a few handfuls of earth thrown upon it showed that dust had been added to dust. The small assemblage then gladly dispersed, for their hoods and cloaks were penetrated

by the rain; Mr. Gadsden re-entered the church to deposit his garments in the vestry,—then there was the accustomed wrapping up,—then he hurried from the churchyard,—and then the old sexton was left to fill up the grave, shovel by shovel,—alone with the dead.

Mr. Gadsden ran after the landlord of the Castle, wet as it was, to ask if this lady's name were really Neville. Where she came from, the landlord could not tell; his bill was paid, he knew that,—a gentleman had arrived in hopes of seeing her, but not until the breath was out of her body,—and he had gone away,—and the landlord of the Ladder and Castle did not wish it known that he had had a death in the house; nor the medical man that he had lost a patient. So Mr. Gadsden promised secrecy; and being not a woman, did not confide the secret to six particular friends, entirely "in confidence," but kept it locked up in what he called his heart.

Mr. Gadsden reached his lodgings in much better spirits than he had left them; the change of ideas had done him good. There was a note lying on the pembroke table, (the pride of his heart, bees-waxed as it daily was,) and Mr. Gadsden discerned Mrs. Stanhope

Floyer's handwriting. He doubted at first whether he was almost prudent in opening it, and felt as if a fresh assault were about to be made upon his affections. "But she is not Miss Emma," broke from his lips, and he cut the seal round with a pair of pocket-scissors.

"Dear me! dear me! an invitation,—Mrs. Adams,—how very obliging of Mrs. Stanhope Floyer!" he addressed his landlady, who entered with a bason of gruel—"to meet Sir Francis Hippisley and family. There are young ladies there,—here, Mrs. Adams, you may put a little brandy in my gruel; I feel rather chilly to night—stay, do you know, I could fancy a toast and a glass of brandy and water instead of gruel,—Tim can have that."

"Tim!" Mrs. Adams shook her head. Tim took something more solid than gruel,—but the good lady approved of the change. "I never see no good come of eating them slops," was her remark as she took the brandy bottle out of a little closet in the wall, wherein were many treasures,—white and brown sugar, a little soap, a few candles, a little wine, some doyls for best occasions, some lozenges, some tamarinds, some black currant jelly, some hartshorn and oil, and sundry other matters.

"—No mourners to follow the poor body

to her grave?" asked Mrs. Adams, as she drew out from the darkest recesses of the cupboard a nutmeg-grater and some nutmegs, and began to give a relish to the brandy and water.—"No one there?"

"No one that I saw—I observed on her coffin,—sit down a little, Mrs. Adams,—that the defunct was not more than thirty-three years of age, Anno—I wonder what she died of; cold, I dare say, cold,—by the by, Mrs. Adams, there's a draught from under that door, you should put a sand-bag; do you know, I often feel a crick in my neck."

"Do you indeed sir?" said Mrs. Adams with an air of deep commiseration; "that's a sad affair. This poor lady, sir, began with a galloping consumption. I heerd as it was a fever, at the last, sir." And thus the good landlady prefaced her recital of a short, but sad story.

She who had come to Northington to die had once been, as it seemed, caressed, admired, perhaps honoured. But the sunny season was at an end; none knew the gradations from hollow prosperity to gnawing misery; they may have been sudden—they may have been gradual; dear to none,—despised of many, inquired of but by one associate, whose desperate fortunes she had shared,—in whose ruin she

had participated, Helena Neville had been hastily, peremptorily summoned to *her* account. No husband,—no child,—no female friend had hastened to bathe her burning brow, or to moisten her fevered lips, or to speak words of comfort to the comfortless. Yet she had a husband, children,—and, once, friends.

—A few short days and nights of restlessness and wanderings,—some hours of death-like stillness, and that throbbing heart was at rest. That voice, so harsh in its half-maniac pitch, was mute,—the form, which disappointment, infamy, and corroding passions had wasted even before it became a prey to fever, lay extended alone, in the lodging of an humble inn. And, such was fate's mysterious chance, those poor remains were now laid where every Sabbath the feet of one deeply, irretrievably injured, should pass close to the mouldering relics.

Such was the pith and moral of Mrs. Adams's story: its details were, believe me, infinite: there was the way she was "took," and the way she was not "took,"—and how a sister of Mrs. Adams, twenty years before, had died of precisely the same disease, and how old Mr. Huxley remembered to have cured one case of it some fifty years before, by effervescing draughts; and what, the first day, the poor lonely creature did eat; and what after that she did not eat;

how she asked what o'clock it was an hour before she died, and what an exceeding nice clean, fair corpse she was to look upon; what the shroud was made of, and how many nails there were in her coffin.

It was late before Mrs. Adams, inspired by a share in the Curate's brandy and water, had finished these particulars; and the clock struck ten before she had quite concluded something about the pall. Mr. Gadsden then rose; an earthquake would not have kept him up after ten;—and Mrs. Adams disappeared.

“Dinner at five o'clock,” said the curate, looking again at Mrs. Floyer's note. “'Tis a late hour certainly, but for once,—I thought I *had* said in her presence that four o'clock was my usual time,—indeed I wonder what people mean by dining so late as five o'clock. However, for once, and not to disappoint Mrs. Stanhope Floyer—”

Accordingly, not to disappoint Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, and forearmed with an egg, beaten up, in order to enable human nature to sustain the late hour of five, Mr. Gadsden on the appointed day, walked up to the Grange; his dress was a model of neatness and precaution, and he carried his pumps in his hand.

There were only Mrs. Floyer and Mrs.

Meadows when Mr. Gadsden entered the drawing-room, but there was soon a reinforcement of the male sex, in the person of Eustace Floyer and of Mr. Powell; then poured in such a party from and of the Hippisleys;—there were four of themselves, and they had offered to bring three friends.

“You’ve an exceeding pretty place here, Mrs. Floyer,” was Lady Hippisley’s gracious remark. “I was saying what a pity you don’t turn the carriage-road off to the right, and if the place were mine, I should take away those enormous griffins or dragons — which did you say they were, Annabella? — on the iron gates.”

“But the place is not mine,” returned Adeline, looking at Eustace Floyer. “I have no right to touch a single stone.”

“—But, if you wish to make the alteration that Lady Hippisley suggests,” cried Eustace—

“Oh! no, no, I would not alter anything about Woodcote.”

There was a plaintiveness in the tone of her voice which Eustace misunderstood. He looked grave for a few moments, and until the party sat down to dinner, scarcely spoke.

Every one had been struck on coming in, with the elegance and animation of the

beautiful hostess. It is an often-contested point at what period of life a woman is most lovely. George the Fourth said, forty-five, but I fear, since his death, the forty-fives must give it up. Adeline was now five-and-twenty, an age preceding that in which habits draw certain lines on the face; an age preceding the calculating, but not the reflecting period of life; when prudence, that ugly virtue, has as yet driven away the guileless spirits, the *bandon*," to use for once a word which we do not supply in our language, which is so delightful in women of refinement, because they never overstep the barrier between vivacity and levity; they always know when to check theirs—and themselves.

Never was Adeline more easy, more engaging, or more admired than on that day. Once only she appeared confused; it was when her relation, Eustace, took his appointed place at the bottom of the table, opposite to her. What made Mrs. Stanhope blush then? I thought Mrs. Meadows, — "Ah! I know. I can enter into her feelings. Our fates are similar."

There was of course a great deal said about game, enclosures, crops, and turnpike roads at this dinner, but such themes no good subject

who lives even in these days can hope wholly to escape. The latter part of the reign of George the Third was peculiarly un-literary: there were no Athenæums, Literary Gazettes, Spectators, &c., to furnish the idle with at least something to think of, and the thoughtful with many themes of curious investigation, or of lively interest. There were no "Charlotte Elizabeths," for the small good; only Hannah More's ponderous cannonade of instruction, firing off into the ears of the spiritual-minded. Ladies were not so favoured in their physicians and preachers as in the present day. The former were staid old women, with gold-headed canes and nosegays; not the adorable, fascinating, and divine creatures that now divide the hearts of young Countesses and misses with the last new Curate at St. George's, or the charming evening Lecturer at All Souls'. There were few safety-valves for the natural energies of single women then, as there are now, in numerous societies, and charities; the sins and virtues of the poor excited, comparatively, little commiseration; even the lectures of the Royal Institution, which have raised the character of many middle-aged ladies into a respectability of knowledge quite gratifying, were not so much as dreamt of in those dull, dull times.

The ladies retired to the drawing-room, to talk of the usual drawing subjects ;—to taste of scandal and bohea ; and the gentlemen stayed to discuss port-wine and politics. Sir Francis Hippisley became sleepy and mild over the potations ; Sir Tufton Tyrawley, peppery and opinionated ;—loquacious without being eloquent, for Mr. Powell was that abjured and despised thing, a Whig. Eustace had also attached himself to the party of all “the talents,” so that Sir Tufton’s aides-de-camp, Mr. Gadsden and Sir Fanny, could do him very little service with such antagonists. But to hear how the little man talked of the ruin of the state,—the downfall of the aristocracy,—as things contemplated by the opposite party ; how he confounded the moderate and the violent together, how he seemed to think that not to believe all was to believe none ; how he talked even about Divine right, and commended passive obedience ; and it was amusing (though I do not remember it myself) to hear the politicians of the last reign but two speak of those points which would have, if rendered practical, unseated all the Georges ;—how he thundered against Whigs, revolutionists, and atheists, classing them altogether ; how he advocated all that had

been, and reprobated all that was; and then, how very very warm the worthy Baronet grew; how vehement was his action when he spoke of schemes to undermine the church,—conspiracies to ruin the state,—projects to plunge society into anarchy, calamity, and chaos. It seemed as if there were a foretaste of that terrible crisis in the Baronet's mind. At length, Sir Francis arose, and the gentlemen went up to the drawing-room just in time to hand the ladies down to their carriages.

“So they are all gone! and I'm glad of it,” cried Mrs. Meadows, as the door closed upon the tall figure of Lady Hippisley. “Let us be snug. I don't speak French as I used to do, or I could quote a saying,—*Le bonheur du jour commence à dix heures du soir.*”

“It's melancholy to see such men in the church!” exclaimed Sir Tufton, “as Powell,”—and he drew near to Mrs. Meadows, and fought his political battles over again to her. The widow sympathized, of course, in all he said;—joined heartily in his hatred of the assistant demagogues of the day;—held up her hands when Sir Tufton became excited; and agreed with the Baronet that one thing was at the bottom of all this,—education.

“Only to think of those Brooksbanks's.

He was indebted to my late husband for every shilling he possesses. She, I have heard, has stood behind a counter,—and how they are educating their daughters!—French, — geography, velvet-painting,—the use of the globes, and the piano-forte.”

“Too much for any one head to carry,” said Mr. Gadsden, who was a little, a very little elevated.

“Geography,” said Sir Tufton, “will make them discontented with home;—by teaching them to know the attractions of other countries. As to French! that is a language for ladies and gentlemen; the piano-forte—”

“Don’t talk of it, Sir Tufton,” said Mr. Gadsden. “I’ve a girl’s school opposite to me,—I declare I believe they practise in their sleep.”

“By the by, Mr. Floyer,” cried Mrs. Meadows, “what a charming treat it is to hear your friend Lady Hippisley play those sonatas of Pleyel’s; it is perfection! and what a touch she has! Charming girls the Hippisleys! Miss Hippisley’s large and striking,—Miss Annabella’s a picture of loveliness,—that girl has something on her mind,—I know her state of feelings so well. You wouldn’t believe, Sir Tufton, that I was once such an extremely sus-

ceptible person, that my happiness," — Mrs. Meadows sighed, and Sir Tufton took the opportunity as he bowed, of saying,

"I feel convinced that Mrs. Meadows is all soul—let me hope those perils to your peace may never return."

"I don't know what to say as to that, Sir Tufton? But see, our dear Adeline has walked out into the cloister; positively, they have left us alone! What can they mean? What can they be about? I must go, indeed I must go to them!"

"There is no occasion, my dear madam, for that perturbation of manner, that agitated air—pray take my arm, and let me lead you to your friends. You see, my dear Mrs. Meadows, with regard to Powell, I think it right for a man of my influence to put such fellows down; don't you think I am right? I am charmed to have your approval."

"Why does he go on talking of Mr. Powell?" thought Mrs. Meadows *inter se*.

Mrs. Floyer, Mr. Floyer, and Mr. Gadsden were walking up and down the cloister. It was a balmy, May moonlight; and the odour of the honeysuckle greeted those who passed to and fro, and the hoot of the distant owl, softened by distance, suited the old character

of the promenade: the moonlight fell strong upon the plain surface of the lawn, dotted by parterres;—beyond there was a solemn depth of gloom in the woods; above, how fair was the companionless planet!

Adeline was leaning on the arm of Eustace. Those were sweet moments. The fatigues of company were over:—they who loved each other were left alone, or next to alone, for Mr. Gadsden was scarcely in a condition to disturb the *tête-à-tête*. No further reference to his hopes and wishes had been breathed by Eustace; yet *he hoped*—and, as he sometimes bent down his head to speak to Adeline, to look into her face, beautiful even by the pale moonlight, there was, in her, a gentle confusion, an involuntary hurry of manner that was little like indifference, and he would not have exchanged those whispered and faltering accents for all the wisdom of the ancients.

“All the sentiment in the world cannot make me stand here to catch cold,” cried Mrs. Meadows, after one or two turns; and presently she and Sir Tufton retreated. Mr. Gadsden remembered the night dews—and was sober enough to go in also. Eustace and Adeline continued to pace the cloister,

stopping now and then to catch the distant hum of the village, at a mile's distance; but, perhaps, it was an excuse, for appearing to have some object in their promenade.

"—The other evening, as I walked here, weary of myself, for it had been raining all day, I even heard the bells of Northington," said Adeline; "they tolled for a funeral, I suppose. I am ashamed to tell you, but the sounds seemed to me almost ominous; I went in in a sort of panic. Was it not strange?"

"Not in one so lonely and so sensitive—

Eustace took her hand as he spoke:—"When may I hope to share that solitude? to—"

"Do not ask me; do not speak to me on that subject for years," exclaimed Adeline, suddenly, very suddenly withdrawing her hand, as a certain recollection returned to her mind. "Let us go in doors."

"There is no occasion; you need not fear my renewing any theme disagreeable to you," replied Eustace gloomily. He led her into the drawing-room, and placing Adeline in a chair, retreated, with a settled expression of disappointment and vexation on his countenance.

Like most persons of strong feelings, Eustace

was jealous—jealous not of the living, but of the dead; and I know not whether it is not the most gnawing jealousy of the two; for we respect, and cannot challenge the love which follows its object to the grave—but regard with an acute and bitter envy the hallowed remembrance of one who can now do no wrong, whose merits cannot be effaced by human passions; the love for whom may gradually diminish, but cannot change. Adeline, dispirited, had not resolution, even whilst Sir Tufton and Mrs. Meadows were preparing to depart, to call Eustace to her, and to whisper to him that on the ensuing day she would explain to him all. She was irresolute:—could she drive him from her upon a dream, a vision? And so driven, he could never, until the lapse of years could determine the question of Stanhope's existence, return to her again.—“What should she do?”

As she asked herself this question a name was uttered by Mr. Gadsden, which instantly aroused her faculties; a name associated with what was once poignant, still painful—Helena Neville! She turned with a scared look to gaze upon the curate: he and Sir Tufton and Mrs. Meadows were talking over some subject together.

“What a strange affair! a lady coming by herself, and dying by herself, and the name, the name is quite familiar to me. Adeline, my dear, don't you remember a very pretty woman at Lord Mauley's in the time when your poor dear papa was alive. Surely her name was Neville! My love, how pale you are!”

“And how—what—when?” gasped Adeline. “When was Mrs. Neville *here*?”

“She is here now,” said Sir Tufton jocularly: “in the grave?”

“Is she dead?” Adeline muttered to herself. “Dead! And on what day?”

“I buried her four days since,” said Mr. Gadsden. “There were no chief mourners: one of her friends came to see her when alive; but none, indeed, followed her when dead.”

“A female friend?” asked Adeline, every limb shaking.

“No, some gentleman. It was a sad affair, so young a lady, and her dying before any one could get to her.”

“My dear Adeline, you are quite ill—quite, quite ill! Sir Tufton, do me the favour to lay her feet upon that sofa. Thank you, Mr. Floyer.”

“No, not *you*,” said Adeline, as Eustace

raised her in his arms; but she had not power to say more.

“Gentlemen, be good enough to withdraw,” cried Mrs. Meadows. “I am sure, to *gentlemen* I need not repeat the expression twice. Dear, darling love!” seeing Adeline revive, “what is the matter?”

“I will explain all to-morrow. Leave me—to-night.” As she uttered these words Mr. Floyer suddenly entered the room.

Adeline extended her hand to him. “You were angry with me to-night, Eustace. To-morrow, when I explain all, you will not be angry with me.”

Eustace kissed the hand given to him. “When I see you ill and unhappy, dearest Adeline,” he began,—

“Shall I leave the room?” asked Mrs. Meadows. “I know by experience, lovers like to be left alone.”

“Oh, Louisa, we are not lovers!” And Adeline endeavoured to withdraw her hand from that of Eustace as she spoke.

“Are we not lovers, Adeline?” whispered Eustace. “Oh, answer for yourself: *I* can love no one else!”

“Do not think about *that*—go—go, dear Eustace! Good night, good night!”

The injunction was uttered in a tone not to be disobeyed,—and alarmed, and apprehensive, yet not unhappy—for who can be unhappy that feels he is beloved?—Eustace, conducting Mrs. Meadows to her carriage, withdrew for that evening.

There are occasions in life in which one feels peculiarly the value of ties of relationship, even when those who compose those ties assimilate with us but little in their ideas and character. The blessings and comfort of family union are best understood in situations of difficulty, when the credit of a family is at stake, and no stranger can intermeddle in its sorrows. Few persons could be more dissimilar than Adeline and her step-mother. There had been moments when their uncongenialty had, on the part of Adeline, almost amounted to dislike; but those disagreeable moments were gone, never to return. The good and kind properties of Louisa had come forth to view: and her ready sympathy was now a solace to Adeline, who, on the ensuing day, disburthened her mind of her apprehensions.

“I own I should think it a nice point,” was Mrs. Meadows’s observation; “supposing myself to be in your situation—a young widow, and that any doubt *could* by any possibility

rest on the death of dear, lamented Mr. Meadows ; and we will say, for argument's sake, Sir Tufton, or any other gentleman should take a fancy to me ; I confess I should feel at a loss how to act."

"How strange," replied Adeline, "the different state of our feelings at different periods of our lives. There was a time, Louisa, when I should have hailed with rapture poor Stanhope's return even from a day's pleasure : there was a time when the very idea of his death appeared to me a thought not to be endured ; and now I dread his existence as a misery !"

"You once loved him."

"God, who knows my heart, only knows how fondly. God only knows how long I clung to hope after our last abrupt farewell. And I have always looked upon the report of his destruction at sea, by a shipwreck, as an improbable story. *How* I loved him !" Adeline paused for many moments ; and then resumed. "Any other love seemed to me, once, impossible, now, almost criminal—but nothing is impossible in this changing world. My affection was, indeed, once so strong that I remember the intensity of its suffering chiefly ; various circumstances have contributed to lessen it."

“What, chiefly?”

“The certainty that I was not beloved! Believe me, no heart can stand that long,—neglect, infidelity, desertion! I am ashamed of the vehemence with which I speak, when the object of my resentment is mouldering in his grave—or worse, perhaps, living to sin: Louisa, let us never speak on this subject again.”

“Not I. I have so little curiosity in my nature, that I am sure never to tempt you to disclosures, dearest Adeline. Only tell me, how you really felt upon his death?”

“Heart-struck,—awe-struck,—appalled! for I knew he must, if called away, have been unprepared; yet thankful that such a career was closed, that no more misery and guilt—Alas! my poor Stanhope!” she added, after a pause, bursting into tears; “he is gone! let us bury his faults in his grave! I will think no more of this apparition, to which my fancy gave a form; I will endeavour to believe that it was not *that* Mrs. Neville. I will not speak on the subject to Eustace.”

“I think you very right there,” said Mrs. Meadows. “Many a happy marriage has been spoiled by saying too much; and our charming superior relative is sure to be courted by others.”

“It would be happier for him, perhaps, if—” Adeline began, but she could not finish the sentence.

“Ah, my dear creature!” cried Mrs. Meadows; “when will our troubles cease? when will our poor weak minds be at rest? I blush to own it, indeed I do,—the extreme susceptibility of my nature. And then, most of my flames have been gentlemen who did not speak their minds out, only dealt in general expressions; and I don’t know anything so disagreeable.”

“Are you,” inquired Adeline, “alluding to some recent vexation?”

“Have you not found it out? what, haven’t you eyes in your head? Well! I thought everybody must have found *us* out.”

“Mr. Jones,” Mrs. Stanhope Floyer began—

“Mr. Jones, another of your widowers, with precious relics of departed saints! Thank you. When you find me marrying a school-master, or a widower with many children, or even a man with a heap of younger brothers and sisters, I give you leave to shut me up in a lunatic asylum, any day; and I would rather be in one, than in Mr. Jones’s Northington High House Academy, with young gentlemen, ‘boarded and instructed;’—it makes me shudder.”

“Well, then, Mr. Gadsden?”

“You are nearer the mark; less unlikely than the first, for Gadsden’s a neat little man, whom one might set up in a china closet for show; fit to stand out as a specimen of neat fitting coats and trowsers, in the Bull-ring at Wolstone; but no! I find ‘no lustre in the eyes that look not kindly on me.’ Jones delights me not, nor Gadsden neither.”

“Then I cannot think of any one else; there is no one except Sir Tufton Tyrawley.”

“*Except*—such an exception. Poor, dear, darling, Sir Tufton! so you have n’t found him out; you don’t discover how desperately, how dreadfully in love the charming little baronet is! I wish I could be as blind—don’t look at me, don’t; I’m ashamed that you should see my confusion.”

“Then why should he not propose?” said Adeline, somewhat embarrassed; “I am sure there is no time to—”

“No time to lose, so I say: but dear Sir Tufton’s so timid—and I,—I, you know, was and am the most retiring, foolish creature in existence,—but dear me! after all I’ve gone through, and the disappointments I’ve had, it’s so natural I should be timid. But, my dear love, since you’ve got this avowal out

of me, and you are pretty well, and you will be sure to have Eustace coming to see you, I just remember that there's a little affair going on at our house, the chintz room bed-curtains being put up; so I'll calm my mind, and walk home. Farewell! dearest, amiable creature!"

A lesson to the vain! Mrs. Meadows hurried away. She spoke only what others think:—how universal is the delusion which she betrayed; how long, how much too long do we cherish the idea that we can still fascinate. Is it, in short, *ever* given up?

Sir Tufton and Mr. Gadsden could have answered, *Never*; or, at any rate they were not prepared to fix the duration of that charming state of self-deception to which we cling so pertinaciously.

Left to her own reflections, Adeline pondered long upon her present condition. The long-tried attachment of Eustace was now fully known to her; she believed it to be unconquerable; for her sake he had ventured to Coughton House, under a feigned name,—for her sake he had surrendered Woodcote to his cousin, when he was assured that her happiness depended upon her union with the unfortunate Stanhope. It was he, who by

the sacrifice of a large portion of his fortune, had persuaded Mr. Meadows to give his consent to that marriage; this was heroic generosity, the generosity of a very young man. Had Eustace been put to the test ten years later, he would not, perhaps, have displayed the same exalted disinterestedness.

“And how shall I return this noble conduct?” thought Adeline? “By concealment? by hiding, as I have declared that I will, those secret, corroding perplexities which concern *him* so nearly? Something tells me that I cannot, I must not be his,—that flitting form was sent, perhaps in mercy, to remind me of one over whose fate the oblivion, but not the peace of the dead, has passed—to warn me that I am his. Poor Eustace! his thoughts, his heart have been so bound up in this one hope; can I destroy it?” She paced up and down the room with the rapidity of a harassed mind, whilst she revolved these questions. Evening was drawing on; the lights, usually brought, had not been rung for, yet there was light enough to see dimly. Adeline was suddenly checked in her perturbed movements by hearing the door of the room opened. She turned round—a figure stood at the door; his hand was extended towards her. The attitude,

the height, and air, were those of Stanhope Floyer. "It is! it is!" she exclaimed wildly; whilst her feet were riveted to the spot where she stood. She would have sunk, but she was encircled with a protecting arm. She looked up, and saw the features of Eustace:—"You are so—so like," she gasped, as her head fell upon his shoulder.

Eustace made no reply. His manner was grave, rather than cold, as he chid her for being frightened, and blamed himself for entering abruptly; gradually Adeline recovered her composure—but she wept, a weakness unusual to her of late—like one who had received some dreadful shock.

"I am very wretched, Eustace; and I will tell you all. You have avowed your love for me, — oh, do not call me unkind, when I confess that there is something in that very avowal that shocks and terrifies me,—promise, promise me, that you will speak of it no more?"

"You cannot — you cannot, then, forget him whom, to your fancy, I so much resemble?"

"I would fain forget him," cried Adeline: "I can think of his loss without a sigh—I can dwell upon the days I spent with him now without anguish; but a voice seems to

say to me, Love not again! Dear Eustace, whilst poor Stanhope's fate is uncertain—"

"But *is* it uncertain? You have never doubted it, until of late;—every inquiry respecting him has ended in that one account—the ship in which he sailed was seen but once during its passage,—then, no more! no vestige—not a wreck, not a trace were ever found to tell how, and where it foundered."

"Yes, but did he sail in that ill-fated vessel?" said Adeline, fixing her eyes wildly upon the changing countenance of Eustace. "Listen to me: we parted fondly, Eustace—forgive these tears—he had my first affections; and could he have been contented with my love; had he not long ere we took our last farewell, ceased to care for me, that affection, earnest, true, would have ceased but with my life. I must now disclose that which will dye my cheek with shame—but it must be avowed. You know his mysterious disappearance—the rumours which were raised—the dark surmises that my husband was concerned in the murder of Sir Horace Wentworth—I believed them not; I believe them not now! they sank, indeed, into my heart, which had never before experienced that greatest of miseries, the imputed guilt of one beloved."

“But he has never, since the morning that he left you, been heard of?”

“He *has*. I have recovered from the sting now—I can speak of it—think of it—though to no one, not to my father even, was that disclosed which I now tell you. Amongst the associates of our London life, there was one person who might, perhaps, have paused in her career had she known that she inflicted unmerited pangs on one so wretched as myself. She was then young, beautiful, admired. I wish not to judge her—often have I watched her with a breaking heart. It is over now—her name was Neville.”

Eustace started. “I remember her with horror,” he said, indignantly.

“Eustace, whilst I deplored *my* Stanhope’s death—whilst I believed that he had been wiled away for some purpose connected with Lawson’s guilt—whilst I wept over his fate,—all my young affections restored to their freshness by pity and regret—whilst my heart yearned for him—whilst I pined for his return until my health even gave way under the deprivation—oh, God! even at this moment the memory of what I suffered chokes and oppresses me—he, Stanhope, for whom I would have died, had fled with Mrs. Neville!”

“How, how do you know it?”

“From himself. Oh, Eustace! tell it not again, let *this* secret die with you. I would not publish his disgrace—I have forgiven him!—wretched, oh most wretched as he was!” She wept as she continued her story. “He wrote to me once, to tell me that he was going abroad, to say how impossible it was that we should ever meet again, and so—and so, Eustace, our first love was ended. I heard of him no more: they say he perished in the waves.”

“This accounts for—I remember, Adeline, your anguish—your inconsolable grief; and your unexpected restoration to composure.”

“The evil, in time, worked its own cure. I will not dwell on what I felt; I had many times forgiven, cherished, loved him again. I never reproached him—but it is not in human nature still to cleave to that which a pure mind abhors. In time, I learnt to think of him but little, and I was thankful when they brought me tidings of his death. Till lately I believed those statements.”

“And what mistaken, what superstitious misgivings have unsettled that belief?” asked Eustace, whilst his face, even his lips, grew deadly pale.

“Even but a few days after, Eustace, this stranger who died alone, uncared for; whom you heard of but last night; even when she, whoever she might be who bore that name, had been but recently laid in her grave, I saw, skirting our woods, a form I never can forget,—it seemed to me like Stanhope. The countenance was his; still it was *not* like him; there was a harsh cold gaze, unlike the face I remember once *so* beautiful. I was struck by the resemblance; then, no trace of anyone roaming about the park being discovered, I gave up that idea. Now, the circumstance of Mrs. Neville’s death—the stranger who arrived too late—*he* could not be a relation: a relation would have stayed to follow her to her grave; but one who had not a husband’s right to perform that sad office would have hurried away from scenes which may have reminded him of her whom he loved once.”

There was a silence of some moments. Adeline was the first to resume the painful explanation.

“—After this disclosure, Eustace, we must part; it will be but one struggle, and then we shall know that we have done what is right. I can remain here no longer. Time, absence, reflection, will reconcile us to a separation,

which God must sanction. You speak not—oh, aid my courage, do not weaken it! I require your stronger mind to lean upon. Do not, dear Eustace, shake my resolution by giving vent to your feelings. There can be but *one* right path.”

“—It is finished—the struggle is ended; I perceive that you are prepared to leave me,” she added, after a few moments observation of the thoughtful countenance which was but partially averted from her. She saw the tremor and the conflict—she saw the conviction and consequent resolution—all that she read; for she knew every line of that expressive face; the workings of that honourable and sterling mind were pictured on it, clear as the shadow of the sun upon a dial.

“I see you are prepared,” she continued, in a fainter voice. “You are resolved—you are right—very, very right.” Adeline endeavoured to smile as she spoke; but a look of intense suffering, the pallid hue of anguish, overspread her face as she spoke.

“—Do not say anything more, Eustace; you think, with me, that it may be so—that there may be still bonds—bonds!—ties!—gracious God! why do I tremble? no ties, no obligations can force me to see him again—to

receive as my husband one who has broken every tie! I cannot be compelled to that."

She arose in indescribable agitation. "I hope I shall be spared from *that*," she exclaimed, in a low, trembling voice. "I forgive him; but a wife who lives with an adulterer degrades herself."

Adeline spoke with a firmness, a vehemence unusual in her. Thus abandoned in the prime of life, still young, attractive, capable of forming a strong and lasting attachment, what temptations would have beset her path had not her heart been guileless, and her sense of God's especial superintendence constant and inspiring! Eustace could not, when he looked at her, remember the bitterness of his own disappointed hopes; he could only contemplate, pity, and revere.

His nature was heroic as her own. When he arose, and, standing before Adeline, looked at her stedfastly, she saw that his mind was fully determined. He gazed long upon that beloved countenance before he spoke.

"Whilst there is any *doubt*, Adeline, even if it be not well-founded, we cannot, must not meet again! it may be the banishment of years—" Eustace could not proceed. "It is of no use saying more," he added, after a pause of violent emotion.

“Yes, one word, Eustace:—you are free. Domestic affections are necessary to your happiness; seek them, and none will rejoice more than I shall in your felicity.”

Eustace shook his head; his eyes were moistened with tears. “Though we shall not meet, I shall watch over you,” were his few broken words, as he wrung her hand and hurried away from the lonely and unhappy Adeline.

CHAPTER IV.

If thought were vengeance, then its thought
A ceaseless fire should be,
Burning by day, burning by night,
Kept like a thought of thee.

L. E. L.—*Glencoe*.

For a year Woodcote Grange was shut up, and its lawns were neglected, and its parterres were overgrown; the birds flew, presumptuous and unheeded, into its very windows; the jessamine at the porch grew straggling and luxuriant; and all denoted the absence of one who had rejoiced in the beauties of the old place.

Restless and dejected, Adeline travelled from place to place, sometimes abiding in London, sometimes settling at the coast; at length, after a residence of some months amid the romantic scenery in the neighbourhood of Torquay, she journeyed slowly towards her own home. Three years had now elapsed since the

alleged death of Stanhope Floyer ; and it was reasonable to think that had he been alive some token of that circumstance, some want, or wish would have indicated. But not a trace of her ill-fated and profligate husband had Adeline's utmost exertions gained : and she now completely regarded him as no longer in existenc.

She reached the gay city of Bath, in the course of her wanderings : for a letter from Mrs. Lawson, requesting that she would visit her mother, rendered a few days' sojourn there a duty. A reasonable time had now passed away since the untimely death of Sir Horace ; revenge had been gratified—sorrow might have subsided into a softened and pleasing remembrance. But Lady Wentworth had never seen her daughter ; had never expressed a wish for, nor felt an interest in her grandson ; they were to her as dead as he who lay entombed at Coughton ; it was doubtful whether she would even see her daughter's friend ; nor would she, perhaps, but that curiosity acted the part of affection, and procured the admittance of Mrs. Stanhope Floyer.

One morning Adeline was allowed the honour of an interview. She chose an early hour, and was shown into Lady Wentworth's drawing-room : she trembled as she breathed the same

atmosphere with this haughty and vindictive woman, and a sense of relief was experienced when she was received with prim decorum by an elderly lady very unlike the dowager ; a withered, care-worn face, a voice subdued to whisper, a spare stiff form, all bone, were presented to view and hearing, in lieu of the portly aspect, authoritative tones, and imperious deportment of the wretched and contemptible, yet formidable Lady Wentworth.

“—Any commands, madam?” asked a shrill, though low voice, whilst a lack-lustre grey eye fixed its passionless gaze on that of Adeline. “I am a particular old friend of Lady Wentworth; *her* father and *my* father were first cousins, so that I’m staying here to oblige her ladyship till Mr. Carter’s sister has recovered her strength. She enjoys but very indifferent health. You’re not come as in the capacity of a companion, or anything of that sort?” added the humble relation, with a jealous puckered up face.

“Not in the least, madam. I came by appointment,” was Adeline’s reply.

“Lady Wentworth did not say anything about it to me,” said the old lady. “She’s very odd, between us two, she is *very* odd. You have heard, I suppose, that the death of Sir

Horace is thought to have unsettled her reason? You have not heard that? You don't live in Bath.

"She's the same woman as ever," pursued the companion; "she can't forget her wrongs, nor won't till she dies, she says. I advise you not to touch upon the subject of Mrs. Lawson—unless, indeed, she should begin it herself."

"But I am a friend of Mrs. Lawson's; I come with a message from her to her mother," said Adeline.

"Then don't let the Carters know anything about it. They are all in all just now; Lady Wentworth can't choose a gown without Miss Carter's having a say in it,—I wouldn't tell *them* why you came. The truth is, Lady Wentworth's excessively diseased, though she don't think it; you'll find her shockingly altered, shockingly,—'tis only the card-table keeps her alive, and—"

The door at this moment opened, and a heavy step, a deep breathing, as of one oppressed by disease, denoted that Lady Wentworth was coming.

"Her ladyship looks better to-day," said the humble companion timorously, as the dowager walked slowly towards Adeline.

"I'm not better, Miss Harmer! how *can*

you say so?" was uttered in a voice which showed that the lungs had not lost their power. But there were indications of a mortal malady on the once powerful frame of Lady Wentworth, which even Adeline's inexperienced eye could mark. There was that sallow bloodless complexion, with just a patch of red on either cheek, that thick dull eye, that unwieldiness of form, which manifested that the great machine of life had been impeded by some inward disarrangement, or weakened in its powers by mental sufferings.

"Your most obedient, madam," was the phrase with which Lady Wentworth returned the salutations of Adeline. "You are very polite to call upon me. I have no Coughton now to invite anybody to. Have you been there? They tell me Mrs. Lawson doesn't intend to live there—she is quite right—she's quite right."

"I come," said Adeline, "Lady Wentworth, with a kind entreaty from Mrs. Lawson—"

"Madam, don't beset me with lectures. I never will see Mrs. Lawson nor her boy. Pray, has the child stabbed any of his play-fellows yet? Oh, Mrs. Floyer, I have not such a poor opinion of you as to think you would wish me to see Lawson's child—or

Lawson's wife. I suppose she doesn't grow younger?—is she as fond of vanity and dress as ever? or has the fate of that brute, her husband, sickened her of her childish follies?"

"She is leading an exemplary life, devoted to her child, sorrowing, as a Christian, for all that has past. She wishes me to say to you—"

"Tell her I make no inquiries, and I want no messages; and add, if you please, that I am making my will, and leave nothing that I *can* dispose of to the heir of my son's murderer;—the boy, I hear, is well-looking?"

"There are touches of maternal feeling, surely," thought Adeline, "in all hearts;" and she pondered how she should avail herself of these.

"Mrs. Lawson has been indisposed, madam, of late; her health is very delicate, and—"

"Now, Mrs. Floyer, don't beset me with your manœuvres—I won't be worried. Good patience! my poor head will split, with this recommendation, and that recommendation. I bear no ill-will to Millicent; but she chose to think her husband innocent—I knew him to be guilty. No, she is Lawson's widow, but *not* my daughter. Madam, I have suffered enough. I have a few friends here, who know how to conduct themselves to their betters; I wish to be alone and quiet,—I

wish—" and she heaved a deep sigh,—“to be left alone, to bear, as I can, the recollection of—the recollection of my poor murdered boy.” She sank into a chair as she spoke; her lips became almost blue as she went on speaking. “It was such an indignity to offer to the family; I *have* cursed his murderer,” she added, in a low terrific whisper.

“What are you ringing for, Miss Harmer?—who bade you ring?—what right have you to ring up my servants?”

“I though your ladyship was faint—I—”

“And if I was faint, it is best to leave me faint, I shall be sooner in the tomb,” replied Lady Wentworth, articulating very slowly and indistinctly, as she always did when her mind was overcome.

“Take comfort, madam,” said Adeline, soothingly; “think of the blessings around you.”

“Comfort, madam!” answered Lady Wentworth; “every one can preach to me of comfort, and talk to me of my blessings. I suppose I can estimate the blessings I have as well as other people. I suppose I don’t want to be taught my duty—I am a very good Christian. I always was a very good Christian.”

“Her mind is weakened,” whispered Miss Harmer.

"I have always been true to my church and king, and hated schismatics," said Lady Wentworth. "If people were as sure of their salvation as I am — by the by, madam, what is become of your husband? *You* wanted comfort once—have you found it?"

"Don't be angry — take no notice," said Miss Harmer in a low tone.

"Lost at sea, somebody told me—that's a strange story. I thought that some people never *could* be drowned—no offence—I mean no offence. I don't suppose Mr. Stanhope Floyer had any hand in the murder of the finest, the most promising young man—ah! ah!"

Hysterical sobs stifled Lady Wentworth's words. "I had my revenge, that's one comfort," she resumed, after a pause. "Painful enough. People said I followed him to the gibbet; they said what was false, there. I have had enough to bear, what with what one person has said, and another person has said,—but I'm satisfied, I had the condolences of all England. Such letters! I'm not at all ashamed of my conduct at the trial, and tell Mrs. Lawson so; and tell her she needn't wish for my death, it won't benefit her, nor *hers*. So you're going away, isn't it six o'clock, I forget,—and

where is our poole to-night to be, Miss Harmer?"

Adeline waited not for the reply to this question, but took her leave, and departed.

Mr. Carter, large as life, loitering on the stairs, with a dog under each arm, bowed submissively as she passed him. Adeline would fain have stopped—would fain have entreated the chaplain to administer to the wounded, yet rebellious spirit, such solace as his reverend character might well apply. It was awful to see the creature on the brink of the grave, cherishing her now innoxious vengeance; it was terrible to see her fatal security, her appalling insensibility to her perilous, nay, lost condition. If we can imagine *any* sin unpardonable to our Maker, it must be that of revenge; so revolting to His high, benignant nature; so contrary to His principles; so expressly forbidden, and anathematized in His writings.

Mr. Carter was not, however, at all disposed to talk of "death and judgment," or to introduce subjects so unpleasant to "ears polite." He was an admirable hand at piquet, and *vingt-un*, and could even compass a poole at quadrille. He was clever at combing dogs, and stirring fires; skilful in manufacturing

egg-flip; beyond that his capacity did not much display itself during Lady Wentworth's short space of existence. After her death, the relations who were cut out of the inheritance found out that he had been clever indeed. I forgot his spiritual functions: he mumbled a grace every day at dinner, casting a hungry eye meanwhile at the side dishes, and sometimes, it is said, the words "Uncover, John,—amen," were by some casualty interposed between the commencement of the "blessing"—which he invoked, as by his attitude it seemed, to the table-cloth,—and the close of his sentence.

Mrs. Stanhope Floyer's carriage was at some little distance, and, as she waited for it, a hired carriage, out of which peeped two or three merry faces, and loaded with trunks and band-boxes, drew up.

"Ugh!" said the old porter in the hall; "Miss Carter,—Jem, come and see to this waggon-load of boxes."

Miss Carter, smiling courteously on all present, now descended from the vehicle; ordering, but with an air of entreaty, everything around her: "John, that imperial for the blue-room, my cousin is to sleep there; tell Betty,—a fire directly.—Peter, do have the goodness to take my canary bird, and Poll

parrot to her ladyship's dressing-room: they will be more comfortable there.—Hannah, here; I'm tired to death,—warm water and two cups of chocolate up stairs. My cousin's come with me for a short time, I know her ladyship will be glad to see her;—by the by, how *is* her ladyship? — Old Harmer gone?"

“And for such parasites as these has Lady Wentworth exchanged the society of her good, and kind daughter,” thought Adeline, as she entered her carriage. Her thoughts, whilst she drove through the streets of Bath, age's sanctuary, fell upon the condition of solitary old age, its comforts, and its privations; and perhaps to her, as to many others, occurred the wish, that if parasites are essential to the old and wealthy—if friendship be too cold to cheer the decline of life, or relations cannot, a long, a very long probation might be in mercy withheld. People abuse marriage; and, doubtless, to the young a single life has its charms, and has *not* its cares; but look at single old age: in men, seldom passed with virtuous or refined pursuits: to women, a period of frivolity without zest; for the vain and unemployed, an age of cards, or worsted-work, an age devoted to fancied complaints, or to

pious preachers;—to the intelligent, the sensitive, the right-minded, that condition of solitude against which our nature rebels has many moments of suppressed, yet inevitable regret; some yearnings for the ties which the married own, some lonely and desolate feelings must arise even in well-governed minds, and are barely compensated by the luxuries of an over-orderly and undisturbed home, or by the importance of an undivided power over a household of clock-work.

Such was the nature of Adeline's reflections; and if with these there mingled a personal sentiment, a longing not to be alone, to belong to others—to belong exclusively to one, it was the result of her affectionate and sensitive nature, not of a selfish disposition. As she journeyed homewards, hopes which had been before repressed were now indulged, for another year had passed away, and the ill-fated and erring one had, she again believed, hid his follies and errors in the grave. Eustace had written to her often, and, though he named not his cherished sentiments, it was easy to Adeline to read them in every tone of expression, to trace them in every action. She longed, she pined for his society; she gloried in the high reputation which he

enjoyed; and she wondered to find that these feelings were as ardent, as overmastering as in the season of first love, and perhaps more so, for the mind as well as the heart was engaged.

An evening with Loftus and his wife, at Wolstone, might have done much to reconcile Adeline to a lonely lot. A large, dirty, legal, half-furnished house; servants in the singular, and children in the plural number, all on the decrease except the quiver full of blessings, for which man may well be commanded to think himself happy, for it requires an imperative decree to consider it in that light;—such were the objects which the “high” Mr. Loftus Meadows had daily to contemplate. His business, which could never injure anybody by its extent, had fallen to a thing that was; his fortune, which had been ample, had melted away in fruitless speculations, or bad management; and the once clean, spruce Loftus had become slovenly, with nothing left of his original condition but the irritability which its remembrance brought. His wife, who had exerted herself so much to obtain a husband, seemed to think that her exertions were then to be ended. She lay in bed till late, on account of her delicate health; and a collection

of spoiled, dirty, healthy children grew, nevertheless, yearly. The virtue of patience, lost at the fall of man, was not revived in this family: a fine opportunity might have been enjoyed of studying every variety of tone in the human voice by their cries at teatime.

Adeline's good heart had always prompted her to do her best for poor Loftus's seven children. Year after year she had replenished their wardrobes, paid for the education of some, for the doctoring of others; she now exercised even a higher degree of virtue, in bearing their society.

Adeline visited her old friends and acquaintance at Wolstone. Some in that manufacturing region were grown prodigiously rich; others, who had overtopped their neighbours, had, in one day descended from their heights into absolute poverty. The high church party and the dissenters still waged war,—on the score of religion, to be sure; the one party was narrow, genteel, and poor; the other rich, vulgar, and what was called liberal, namely, condemning all that was, and wishing for all that was not.

“Susy, darling,” said Mrs. Loftus one morning, “pull up your shoes, love, your grandmamma is coming to day; Mrs. Mea-

dows is very particular, is she not? Bessy, let's see if I can sew up your frock. Ah, if it hadn't been for grandmamma you'd have had a better frock than this. What a foolish old man Mr. Meadows was to marry again, and injure his son's prospects. Ah, Mrs. Floyer, I beg your pardon, I thought I was speaking to Loftus. But, hark! I hear a ring at the door—Mrs. Meadows, I dare say. Susy, see if Hannah's done washing, and can answer the door."

"'Tis melancholy," thought Adeline. "What can be done to rescue poor Loftus from this state of degradation and annoyance?"

"Mrs. Loftus, how are you? Mrs. Stanhope Floyer! my dearest Adeline, I need not ask you how you are, your looks speak for themselves."

"Is there a chair one can sit down upon?" added Mrs. Meadows, as Mrs. Loftus left the room with the baby on the full roar. "I always tremble for my silks and satins in this dirty hole. Well, how do you like your quarters? very quiet and pleasant, no doubt. Does the baby cry all night as well as all day? How I long to give it some Godbold's mixture, or Daffy's elixir, whilst I at least stay here."

"I am hoping for some news of Northington. I am longing to ask after every one."

"Oh, well!—what haven't you heard? They say, your relation Eustace, as we used to call him, but he's a great man now—to be made a baronet, I hear! I'm told he's devotedly attentive to his old love, Miss Annabella Hippisley, now, I don't think that quite right conduct to *you*. I feel so much for my friends. Oh dear! I wish I could help feeling for them,—my poor heart's worn through and through,—you don't mind about this faithless man, do you?"

"I can hardly believe the report, Louisa. When and where did you hear it?"

"Why, my love,—but is he engaged to *you*? Upon my word, I have contradicted that report to every one, and said you were both free."

"Eustace is free, certainly. I had hoped he would have been here,—but he is not."

"No, so I see; and yours is a delicate situation. And certainly Adeline, dear, there's no denying it, Eustace is cold. Ah, there is no one like our dear lost Stanhope! so warm, so generous! I don't think Eustace uses you well, dear, to stay at the Hippisleys' so long without coming to see you,—and I feel

for you, for I'm very much in the same predicament about Sir Tufton. Tyrawley Court is empty again, he's off to the south, to console Mrs. Lawson Wentworth! How little he thinks of my feelings! In that respect, how different to poor humble Mr. Jones! Not that I would ever give a thought to Mr. Jones; but it's very affecting to see his devotion to his children, and his immense attention to his boys. There they were, all in white trowsers, so clean and nice, walking to church last Sunday afternoon,—Mr. Jones and Miss Allsop—that's his new housekeeper, at the head of them. Mr. Jones had little Alfred in one hand, Jemima in the other. Sweet lovely children!"

Mrs. Meadows dwelt on this pleasing reminiscence for some moments, and then checked herself. "But I mustn't talk in this way;—poor Sir Tufton would be jealous. My love how long do you remain here?"

"I am going to-morrow," said Adeline, the tears starting into her eyes, as she faltered, "there will be no one to welcome me; you will be away, and Eustace—"

"He is otherwise engaged. Dear me! As to myself, I would turn back, if that was all. I am going into Northamptonshire for a

time: there's a regiment, now, that I used to meet at the Weedon Barracks, and it will make it pleasant where I visit;—the officers are amazing gentlemanly men. But, my love, arn't you quite disgusted here?—he—I mustn't say what I think,—but *she* such a dawdle, and grown so fat too! quite a disgrace to the family; then, those eternal babies, that one must kiss once a year. If I were Mrs. Loftus I would take a benefit now and then, and put one or two of them in the way of an open window, or let the boys go bathing. Poor Loftus! such a genteel, noble, handsome fellow as he was once."

Adeline was lost in thought; and Mrs. Meadows did not trouble her with her presence long, but ran off to the market-place to make purchases, coming back with an air of mystery and with some emotion, to say to Adeline,—“Well, I've heard how the heads are to be, all high, and the bonnets trimmed at the top; the gowns are not to have stomachers,—and—will wonders ever cease? we shall have snow in June!—sleeves are tight again!”

CHAPTER V.

What ! am I poor of late ?
'Tis certain, greatness once fall'n out with fortune,
Must fall out with men too ; what the declin'd is,
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall ; for men, like butterflies,
Shew not their mealy wings but to the summer.

Troilus and Cressida.

WE have seen in the preceding chapters how widows fare ; let me beg leave of the reader to introduce him to one of those passages in our mortal life, in which Belial, Beelzebub, and other minor potentates of infernal celebrity would have delighted ; — a matrimonial disagreement.

Sir Francis Hippisley, a quiet man, who never interfered with his servants, voted with his party, right or wrong, and obeyed his wife, right or wrong, was seated in his library in London. Now a London library is a compilation of all that is unpleasant in animate and inanimate nature ; dust, bills, and ill

temper. Like human beings, books soon lose their external look of juvenility in the wearing, smoking metropolis. New editions are presently converted into old ones; works that were destined to be ephemeral, assume the hue of the antique: and then what injustice is done to those sages whom some, endowed with the unfashionable organ of veneration, place in their sanctums; how ghastly and begrimmed old Locke becomes! how savage and dirty Johnson appears; how the folds of Pope's night-cap are laden with dust!

At a table, in unison with the unwashed sages, dull and dim, sits the owner of this charming retreat. Bills and letters, his coachman's book and the paper of assessed taxes, interfere a good deal with the worthy Londoner's converse with Pope and Johnson. By way of variety, his banker's book,—showing how large a debt there is on the wrong side, forms a part of his studies. Above all, harassing settlements, from the destination of a son down to the choosing of a livery, contaminate the place, and cause it to be looked upon, by the martyred husband, as the cave of Trophonius.

A dressing-room is a woman's stronghold. She can always find some pretext for keeping

her husband on the outer side of the door; but into a library the stout of heart, she to whom the vow of obedience should have been paid, not exacted from, *will* enter. If the good man is engaged, she can always—"Wait a few minutes,"—civil enough when there is some point to be gained.

Lady Hippisley, even knocked at the door in her unwonted humility one notable day, when she wished for an audience of Sir Francis. He, poor man! was poring over a tailor's bill. It did not improve his complexion, which was now, merely from the circumstance of paying out money day after day, gaining that ashen hue, which startles one so much in coming back to London, as being universal on the faces of men after forty, as if their visages had been besprinkled with powdered slate-pencil.

Sir Francis had just paid his window and house-tax, when a very respectful letter, not sent as our gentlemanly tradesmen do in the present day, in an envelope, sealed with a crest and cipher, but folded up into a good large honest epistle, engaged his attention. In the most humble terms, it simply reminded Sir Francis that "it was now three years since Messrs. — had been honoured with a sight

of one of his cheques, although they had received the honour of his orders." A different sort of honour altogether.

Sir Francis had exclaimed, on paying the house and window-tax, to which in those days (1781) there were some sweet little addenda, which few are quite old enough to remember with precision, "What a sum for living in this country, and for looking out into the streets!" when a powdered footman, with a golden knot on his shoulder, handed him Mr. Humbleton's "small account."

"And all this," had Sir Francis muttered to himself, "to clothe a set of pampered rascals, who will turn round and give me warning any day, did I venture to abridge one candle in the servants' hall, or to desire of them to look two hours instead of three out of the hall window! Gladly, very gladly would I kick them all out into the street, pay my bills, be an honest man once more, and dare to look tradesmen in the face as I pass them,—but—what?—who's there?"

"I," said the voice of Lady Hippisley.

Sir Francis sighed. "Come in. Well,—I'm in a hurry, love." He spoke courageously when he did not look at his sovereign lady; but as he raised his eyes the baronet's courage fled.

“I must have some money to-day, dear. But that was not what I came to speak to you about” Sir Francis’s pulse began to beat a little more strongly. “I wish to appeal to your feelings as a father.”

Lady Hippisley was a large stout woman, and this appeal, which would have been pretty and touching in a small woman, had the air of a command in her. Sir Francis felt it so. He knew he was going to be drilled into some new part, commanded to make a sally somewhere; he knew it, but he was resigned, he was used to it.

“Well, Lady Hippisley,” he said mildly, as he put his bank-book away and filed the taxes—and a few cares went on the file with them,—“is it about Edward? Has he run into any fresh debt? I am sure I am not the man to help him out. He must get into parliament.”

“Very true; I am glad you see that at last. But that is not what I want to speak about. That former ward of ours, Mr. Floyer, is trifling cruelly with the feelings of our Annabella. This is now the third season she has been out. You see, its extremely hard she should be disappointed. From the time she was sixteen, which—I would not say it to everybody—is now four years, she has been used to think that Eustace Floyer was intended for her. Every body set it down so.

I am sure Lady Ellerlie thought so, and said, what a good thing it would be. Now, Annabella's not the girl to be disappointed. Couldn't you sound Mr. Floyer? you have influence with him; and let him know what Bella's sufferings are. Her maid tells me she lives upon lavender-drops; the dress-maker says she is growing so thin! I hear to-day, Eustace is to be made a baronet and—"

"He has declined that; he thinks an ancient commoner cannot be raised by being made a baronet."

"Just like his peculiarities;—however, it will make many people less anxious to catch him. It is May now, and the season is nearly over. He'll be going down to Woodcote; wouldn't it be best to make him come to the point before he goes? Something must be done. Annabella's inconsolable."

"Make him! He never, from a boy, could be made to do anything; and now, my dear, how little you know the state of affairs. Floyer is amazingly thought of; he is by far the best speaker of the young members; he's not a man to be approached in that way."

"Then we must work upon his feelings." Lady Hippisley pondered for a time. "Then you won't interfere in this affair?"

"Won't was a word hard to say," Sir Francis mildly whispered; "I cannot."

"Well, then; so not for your own daughter."

"My dear, that makes the matter worse; I don't know that I should be a good hand at offering any young lady to any young gentleman, but Floyer is far, far my superior in talents, in worldly estimation, in fortune."

"Yes, I know the necessity of putting forward one's children in life well. What does that man Humbledon mean by sending his clerk so often here? How impertinent it is of people! they can't expect us to pay like vulgar people. My poor Annabella! She fancies that Eustace Floyer has not the slightest suspicion of her preference for him. He *will* not see it, Helen says; but Helen's so blunt and unfeeling. You see, if one could have married Annabella, and got Edward into the House, where these low, insolent tradesmen could *not* have troubled him, you and I and Helen could have retrenched; two footmen would do for Helen and me, instead of three—a great saving. I don't know but that Helen would have let her maid even wait upon me, and Dennis could be sent off—your mind would have been relieved, my dear."

"Yes, but—"

“Always ‘but’ when I want anything done. You, and I, and Helen, would be extremely comfortable in a smaller house. This could be sold; and one carriage might do, and fewer horses—and your mind would be easy—which would be a great consolation to me, my *dear*.”

Sir Francis moved about in his chair, and there was a slight working on his countenance.

“—Besides, the happiness of your daughter; for I think you agree with me that Mr. Floyer would make an excellent husband; so much better than these fashionable rakes, whom one would dread one’s daughter dreaming of. But if you think you cannot speak to Mr. Floyer, and give him a hint of poor Bella’s very decided partiality—I own I perceive something must be done. It would hurt me exceedingly if you were to be obliged to shut up Hippisley Court, a place you doat on. Now, if Bella were married to Mr. Floyer, we could always have the run of his charming house, far, far too good for a bachelor.”

“I grant it would be a good thing,” said Sir Francis reluctantly, “but—”

“But, again! Well, be so very good as to consider what I have said—there’s absolutely another of those odious looking men in the hall, opening a black leather case, to take out

an account," added Lady Hippisley, retreating for a moment, and then issuing forth. "By the by, Sir Francis," she whispered, entering, "Mr. Floyer dines here to-day: there is no other gentleman; you and he will be alone."

"It is all planned, and I suppose I must—I must sound Eustace on the subject; not that it will be of any use," thought Sir Francis, as he turned out of his house, and enjoyed a transient freedom in the streets of London.

"Every one is telling me how ill Bella looks," said Lady Hippisley to Eustace as he entered the drawing-room at the appointed hour. "It makes me dreadfully anxious. I am thinking whether the sea-air—"she paused, and looked at him whom she addressed: but he was absent, and his eyes were fixed on something on the chimney-piece.

"Oh, a sketch of Woodcote! Bella's doing! Very like it, isn't it? Poor Bella's so fond of the place, and that sweet Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, whom we all like so much." There was a slight blush on Mr. Floyer's face as she spoke, and the mother's spirits rose.

"He is strangely altered," thought Lady Hippisley. "Every one says so, and now I perceive it. When a man's out of spirits, he

ought to feel more for others so situated. Bella, my dear, come here. Are you cold, love? Burning hot. Mr. Floyer, do tell me what you think of the sea for Bella. You must remember years ago playing together under the cliffs at Scarborough. Suppose we make a party there again this summer."

"I shall be very happy to do so," replied Mr. Floyer languidly.

"That is delightful! Then you don't intend going down to Woodcote, to visit your sister-in-law? I was going to say—"

"No, not this year."

There was a melancholy in the tone which struck Helen, the strong-headed, clear-minded sister.

"Ah! I thought so," was her secret reflection. "He has an attachment at Woodcote."

Miss Hippisley then bestowed much attention upon the behaviour and appearance of Eustace. His career in the senate had that year been more than successful, it was brilliant: every one had said that the accomplished Eustace Floyer had over-excited himself; there had been a degree of exhaustion afterwards. Suddenly, his health had appeared to fail: yet not to such a degree as to incapacitate him from public business, but to

render that which in health was light and easy, oppressive to him.

Miss Hippisley remarked, that the fine and thoughtful face, which no woman could view without admiration, was overshadowed by care; she observed that Eustace was often lost in a reverie, which politeness might combat, but which gained upon him as by a spell. She perceived that he spoke on subjects of great interest with his usual good sense, but without the animation, the zeal of former days. It was melancholy even to her, to remark the lassitude, sometimes even the deep dejection of his air and manner. Helen—blunt, hasty in temper, but honest and good-hearted, had always entertained a sincere regard for Eustace, and her solicitude for his happiness was disinterested.

The ladies withdrew; and Sir Francis and Eustace were left alone. Eustace respected and loved his guardian—he had received many proofs of kindness from the Hippisley family in his younger days; but he knew their failings, regretting rather than condemning them. He entered with a true sympathy into their joys and sorrows: and it did not surprise him when Sir Francis began, in a jumbling manner, to talk to him of the uneasiness which

Lady Hippisley felt about Annabella;—to explain the reasons why they could not go to the sea immediately; expressing a conviction at the same time that the *sea* would not do her much good.

Poor Sir Francis! It was degrading that he should lend himself to all this; but, happily, his delicacy was not compromised,—Eustace never perceived its drift.

“What do *you* think of the sea?” said Sir Francis, finding that he got on very slowly, and suddenly aroused by the sound of Lady Hippisley’s footsteps up stairs—a sound which brought with it reminiscences of lectures, and visions of an angry countenance.

Eustace looked round surprised. “I should be always much more disposed to ask your advice, Sir Francis, than to offer you mine.”

“—Talking of advice, Eustace, do you remember my recommending you—some four or five years ago—to marry the instant you were twenty-one? and you assured me that you should, if you could? you have not been so good as your word. Nay, don’t look so serious upon it—I shall be afraid that you have met with a serious disappointment. Nay, my dear fellow,” cried the good-natured Baronet, struck by a sudden expression of dis-

tress on the countenance of his former ward, "I am sorry if I have touched any particular chord,—I shall be extremely sorry if I have called up any unpleasant recollections."

Eustace wrung the hand of his old friend in silence; he turned away to the mantelpiece, and sitting down, fixed his eyes steadfastly on the fire. There was something so drooping, so desponding in his attitude as he bent down, his hands clasped on his knees, that the good feelings of Sir Francis were succeeded by curiosity.

"Anything of an entanglement, Eustace—an attachment beneath yourself?"

"Oh, no! do not, my dear sir, ask me. I am recovering—I shall recover in time."

"Of long duration?—your partiality?" inquired Sir Francis, tremulously, for he saw that Bella's chance was up.

"Ever since—ever since I could appreciate what was beautiful and good; it is all at an end now," answered Eustace with a deep sigh.

"Perhaps it is for the best," said Sir Francis, his hopes reviving; "young men, very young men, do not always make the choice that suits them best. They learn them in time, and shake off their old shackles, and are glad enough to form new ones."

“That is not very likely, and, in my case, it is quite, *quite* out of the question. Be so good as not to speak to me on this subject again. Perhaps Lady Hippisley will excuse my going up to the drawing-room to-night?”

“Oh, certainly. Good night—take care of yourself.”

Eustace pressed the hand of his former guardian fervently, and departed.

CHAPTER VI.

O heart of mine ! my once sweet paradise
Of love and hope ! how changed thou art to me ;
I cannot count thy changes : thou hast lost
Interest in the once idol of thy being :
And that too is gone from me,—that which was
My solitude's delight.

L. E. L.—*Erinna.*

THE window-shutters of Woodcote Grange were again unbarred, and the smoke arose from its old twisted chimneys, and its hall-door stood open, whilst, in its court, the poor, and lame, and diseased thronged to hail the return of the kind and liberal benefactress of the wretched,—Mrs. Stanhope Floyer ; and the flowers bloomed in the parterres, and green-house plants decorated the lawn. The noble animal, Boa, the bequest of Lady Theodora to Adeline, lay basking in the sun, his fine head upraised at every foot-step, but quickly indeed when her light tread, whom most he loved, was heard in the cloister.

Adeline had brought away a child of Loftus's, whom she hoped to rear in somewhat of comparative comfort, and with advantages which the rest might, at some future time, alternately enjoy: and occupied with this unconscious little being, the solitariness of Woodcote had not struck, as it usually did, a chill to her heart. Yet, with all the privileges and luxuries of her condition—visited by all within many miles—courted by many, the hours of the lonely one were too often saddened by retrospections. Hitherto she had always had one stay, one support, in the society of Eustace; now that solace was withdrawn—he came not to Woodcote: one short letter, importing that he thought of spending the summer and autumn months somewhere in the north—for then there was no power of crossing the Channel; in those days people were obliged to stay at home—these few lines, which were kind, respectful, but no longer affectionate, were all the intimation that Adeline received of Eustace and his movements.

She understood it all; she received the blow meekly, for it was a blow, but she felt it long and deeply. Eustace had, as Mrs. Meadows said, considered an union with the object of his long-cherished attachment to

be hopeless ; and he had done what any man of good sense and honour probably would do ; he had, with a strong effort, relinquished it for ever. Possibly, as the world thought, some new predilection under happier auspices might have aided the struggle. But had it been a struggle ? how often, in spite of former conviction, in the face of undying recollections, the bereaved ask themselves that question, and the bitter answer is, “ If I had been beloved, I should not have been thus forgotten.”

It is not easy to divert the affections from one accustomed channel—it is hard to bid farewell to hope ; to the spoiled children of this world *how* hard it is. To them the poor may afford that example which is so much talked of as proceeding from the rich. By the poor, when not depraved by vicious habits, how silently are disappointments borne ; with what heroism they face disease and death,—with what submission, but not without agonies,—poignant as when the son and heir of the great and prosperous dies,—do they consign their children to the tomb. Many, many faults have they, even the virtuous and industrious poor ; but the murmuring and rebellious spirit against Him who gives and takes away,

is a weed that grows in richer soils ; nay, even when it displays itself towards man, it is not the indigenous growth of the poor man's hemisphere ; he must be worked up to it—it must be instilled into him—the spark must be blown into a flame ; the flame must be cherished by some watchful incendiary.

Adeline derived many a lesson in the poor cottages of the peasantry ; and to those whose eternal welfare is the one predominant, constant object of thought and hope, how many lessons may there be learned ! We talk of the benefit which may be conferred on the poor by the visits of their superiors, but the advantage is more than reciprocal. Go to the sick bed of the rich man, see how soft are his pillows, how downy his couch, how attentive his ministering friends—how skilful his physicians : yet how he shrinks from the slightest operation which can add one moment's discomfort—how irritable he is if his diet have one atom too little or too much seasoning—how difficult it is to satisfy his peculiarities—how impossible to tranquillize his apprehensions.

Visit his fellow-sufferer in this mortal pilgrimage. See the poor shoemaker at the window of the mews behind your London

residence. From morn to night his paper cap is visible; a few flower-pots, a wallflower and a pink, and a double daisy, put out in fine weather, bring to the hard-working man associations with the plot of garden-ground and village green where he spent his youth. One morning, you miss him from the spot where, scarcely noting him, his paper cap has met your eye day after day for several seasons; the window is shut down, but the plants are taken in, and a little canary-bird, that hung out on a hook above the window, has also disappeared. Child of luxury—enter the sick man's room; you will not stay there long—it is stifling and noisy, the coughing of the broken-down father is drowned in screaming of his unconscious children. Look at his bed—could you sleep upon it one instant? he must lie there six whole months ere it please the merciful Dispenser of good to take him to Himself. Does the poor shoemaker repine? no!—he tells you he has everything he wants; he points to some tea without milk, and some gruel, which it would require the strong appetite of health to relish. The doctor visits him once a-week; his neighbours are kind to him, he says; his club allows him something; his wife has her washing to

do, and the children are, until he is too ill even to notice them, left to his care; not a murmur—not even a regret is expressed!

Returning to her luxurious, her beautiful home, Adeline laid to her heart such lessons as these; in time they had their effect. She saw the widow part with her children; to service, every one—her boys to sea. It is an error to suppose that the poor do not feel these separations; their affections, like their passions, are strong. Many a melancholy face looks over the cottage-paling at eventide, and thoughts of those far away sadden that countenance. The only consolation is a little gossip, and the invariable conviction that “it was to be”—a sort of intuitive philosophy, so far partaking of Christian submission that it prepares the mind for the next great truth—it is “the will of God.” She saw the old—those who had lived together on the same spot, toiled together in the fields, eaten their crust together—separated by death, the one taken to the churchyard, the other left. The case admits of remedy, and remedy there was. The peasantry of England—and in this I am told consists the great difference between them and the rural population of France—tacitly take up the office of comforter whenever it is required. One sits up with the

old man the night his wife dies ; another sees to his fire for him, picks up his sticks — a third leases for him, and all, all *his* world gather round him in the evenings, or see that the helpless old creature is never left alone. How much we value our own self-denial, how much we are be-praised by our friends if we give up a drive in the Park, or sacrifice one party to solace the low-spirited, or to assist the aged mourner ; and, after all, it is done but for a short time. A companion must be found and paid for.

Summer glided away, and towards autumn Northington received back its accustomed inmates. Mr. Gadsden, who had taken a month's excursion, returned ; and Mrs. Meadows gladdened the Grove ; and Tyrawley Court was inhabited ; and the Hippisleys—such was the news that arrived at Woodcote—had taken the hunting-box they had had the year previously, for the autumn and winter months.

“It is very singular, it 's a most singular thing,” said Mr. Gadsden one day to his friend Mr. Bernal, “that Miss Darnford still comes to church, as pertinacious as ever. I went away partly to break the thing ; but there she is again, as if there were no church at Cabbington.”

“But, then, the incumbent there is a family man,” said Bernal; “you see, the ladies *will* run after you, Gadsden.”

“I am remarkably unfortunate,—it will serve them all quite right if I marry, which I’ve been thinking of for some time, if I could make up my mind *where* to look. There’s Mrs. Floyer, don’t mean to marry again, which I’m sorry for. I made a mistake there, in letting that thing go by. She’s quite aware of that, and I shall be sorry to hurt *her* feelings. I am thinking, a steady, discreet woman, not so very young,—somebody to stay at home when I go out, to take care of my keys, and that—with a pretty little property of her own; one who would give her time up to me entirely. I often found the want of some one to copy out my sermons, and set down my linen—to say nothing of mending it. The figures Mrs. Adams makes of my black silk stockings, it is horrible to think of.”

“It would be a charming home for any sensible, prudent woman. Unluckily, ladies are so frivolous now-a-days. Then, you quite give up Miss Darnford?”

“Give her up? I never had any thoughts of her—what can she mean by giving it out? It shows extreme effrontery in these females.”

“Why, she *says*,” replied Bernal — his quiet countenance never changing as he spoke — “that she has been looking after me all this time: they say at Cabbington that she came over here on my account; I don’t know, but I thought it as well to speak to her father, and he’s quite agreeable. I wish you, Gadsden, to tie the knot; I’ve too great a regard for you to ask any other friend to do it.”

“You, indeed! So it is *you* she has been coming to hear? I am very much obliged to Miss Darnford; I’m extremely obliged to her for the compliment she pays to my preaching. Then, I don’t suppose she has ever looked at *me*!”

“Not in the way, not with the sentiments that you suppose, Gadsden,” answered Bernal, with his wooden face, unmoved.

“’Tis very extraordinary.” Mr. Gadsden looked down at his shoes, and brushed a little dust off his trowsers with his hand; pulled out his shirt frill: then he surveyed his friend. Bernal’s coat was for summer; and because he had only sixty pounds a-year — but ostensibly for coolness, — consisted of a slaty brown-back sort of gambroon, made after a pattern, by a sort of cross-legged tailor, who sat in a hole under the cobbler, at the worst end of Northing-

ton; his shoes were great clod-hopping things, half a mile wide, and there was a broad chasm between them and a pair of nankeen trowsers, very tight and short. As to his cravat, it made up for all other deficiencies by width and substance, then not uncommon, going twice round the neck in a sort of swathing, and finishing with a very small, careless tie, not unfrequently soiled by some atoms of snuff.

Such was the worthy Mr. Bernal's toilet at this time of day. But then, as Mr. Gadsden, after a silent survey, concluded, "Miss Emma sees him only in his surplice, and the surplice covers a *great deal*." Besides, Bernal's features were regular, and there was a sort of vulgar handsomeness, which young ladies like Miss Emma Darnford might naturally admire. For the inner man, he was as comfortably ignorant and innocent of any superfluous learning as might be wished—did not speak the best of grammar, and only acquired the aspiration of the letter *h* by dint of some practice.

Mr. Gadsden, the spoiled child of the parish, he who had been the only cynosure of village maidens, could not at all enjoy the jokes which his mistake must have afforded to the merry family of the wealthy farmer of Cabbington. He strutted on with a swelling chest, and

half-offended air, whilst Bernal obsequiously and demurely opened the gates for him, and got over the stiles first to clear away the brambles. And the little curate was difficult to be pleased; one path was too narrow, another too dirty; another would lead past a house he didn't wish to be seen calling at; so they twisted and turned, until they came just before the gates of Woodcote Grange.

“How singular,” said Mr. Bernal; “quite a fate! you've been talking over your future prospects;—look here!—”

He pointed to one of the fronts of the old house, now clothed with the rich Virginia creeper, and with its open windows and curling smoke looking cheerful and inviting.

“—Why not call on Mrs. Stanhope Floyer? You've been thinking a long time of saying something. Come, chance it, my good friend.”

“Really, really, Bernal, I am extremely perplexed; I can't say that I know what to do; but if you think you are in visiting condition, I don't know that I am much worse—just brush the dust off my collar; there was a button above the flap of my coat a little awry this morning. It has not come quite off, has it?”

“Firm as a rock. No; you're just the right

thing: we can go in this way, I suppose," said Bernal, as now, having sauntered through the park, they arrived at a wire fence, which, on the summit of a Ha! ha! skirted the pleasure-ground. "These things will open."

"My dear Bernal, pray, pray remember yourself. Mrs. Floyer's very particular: we must go round to the front; we are not at Cabbington farm," answered the curate, drawing himself up with a sort of spiteful pleasure in setting Miss Emma's favoured admirer down;—"we must go round to the hall-door,—enter by the lodge in general,—ring,—inquire if Mrs. Stanhope Floyer is at home; she may be out on an airing."

"This is by far the nearest cut," said Bernal wistfully. "Gadsden, you'll spoil your complexion walking round in all that sun; surely, you, as an old friend, as a favourite, might go in the garden way."

"Why, I believe I am a little of a favourite." Mr. Bernal opened the wire fence sufficiently to admit two, and he and Mr. Gadsden walked in. "What a pretty place this is! I have always admired this place. I have always told Mrs. Stanhope as much, but she has never taken any notice, perhaps from delicacy—perhaps from delicacy."

“To be sure! you’ll speak a good word for me, dear Gadsden, and say, I’m going to be married; that my intended is a charming girl, quite the lady. I know Emma would like Mrs. Stanhope Floyer to call,—shall I go in with you or not?”

“I think not,” replied Mr. Gadsden, glancing at the hat, coat, shoes, — “Dear me, she is coming this way, and a gentleman with her—Mr. Floyer, no doubt. She never sees anybody intimately except a relation. I am admitted at all hours;—so, they’ve turned aside. They don’t seem to be particularly social with one another.”

“They’re not talking together,” said Bernal.

“No, she’s not a great talker,—and that’s what I like. A woman should listen, not talk. And what have they to talk about? It’s quite enough if a woman can sew well, and play a little. I like a little music,—besides, upon my word, it is quite necessary for a clergyman’s wife to know something of music. A woman should read well—I’m not fond of reading aloud. I like to be read to. I see Mr. Floyer is going away,—bless me, how fast he walks! how very heating!”

“He is come down for a few days to Sir

Francis Hippisley's,—the wheelwright Samson round the corner had his char'ot to mend. They say, Lady Hippisley has caught him for her daughter. They 're very high people, those Hippisleys :—hold their heads up, and trample on every one else ;—that 's *them* Emma says."

"Really, Miss Darnford," Mr. Gadsden began, but he checked himself, "I'll go up and speak to Mrs. Floyer ; she 's sitting alone, without her hat too, and her feet on the damp grass ! She won't expect me to sit there too.—Bernal, you had better come too, in case she should. I can walk about. Your shoes are thick : you may sit down without taking any harm."

"I shall be very happy to be presented to Mrs. Floyer," replied Mr. Bernal. "I shall have great pleasure in making her acquaintance. I never spoke to her but once, and that was at the school. She 's a pretty woman,—I would have put on my other coat had I known as much as that I should have the honour of calling at Woodcote Grange."

"I dare say she'll not observe *you*," said Gadsden hurriedly, as he paced up, across the green sward, to Mrs. Stanhope Floyer.

She rose at his approach ; shades of differ-

ence, and niceties of feeling, were thrown away upon Mr. Gadsden, and utterly thrown away on Mr. Bernal. They could understand a broad laugh, and a flood of tears ; nothing between those extremes could enlighten them very much as to a person's inward joys or sorrows. They did not perceive, that, as Adeline came forward, looking more than usually beautiful in her carelessness and simplicity of dress, her countenance was almost melancholy ; and they did not find out, beneath the veil of habitual politeness which covered her confusion, that she would have much rather that they had not come just at that moment.

They had no thoughts of going away ; it was luncheon time, and Mr. Gadsden lunched, to the minute, at one ; he heard the servants' dinner-bell ring ; — he was riveted to the spot.

In a few moments, to the surprise of the gentleman and, as it seemed, to that of Adeline, Mr. Floyer returned, breathlessly and hastily beating through the bushes of the shrubbery as he came towards the party. *His* emotions were written on his countenance. Mr. Gadsden did not see this : he saw only that Mr. Floyer was very much heated ; and although he always looked the gentleman, and was a fine,

tall, handsome man, that he wore his clothes with an extreme carelessness;—Mr. Gadsden felt that he had the advantage of him there.

Mr. Floyer's return seemed unexpected to Adeline; she turned almost pale as she said very quickly, "Mr. Gadsden, Mr. Bernal, will you be so good as to go in and help yourselves to some luncheon: Mr. Floyer has, I believe, something to say to me. I will follow you in a few moments."

Mr. Gadsden replied, "Most assuredly." Mr. Bernal had no objection. So they soon disappeared and Eustace and Adeline were left alone together.

"I cannot understand your words nor your conduct," said Adeline, whilst, silent and irresolute, her relation stood beside her. "You terrify me, you perplex me. There is something hidden beneath all this strange manner. Tell me the truth, does any new misfortune threaten me?"

"I trust not," returned Eustace solemnly; but he added in a moment, "Oh no! you will, I hope, be long happy and tranquil,—and—whenever I can be of any use, or comfort,—whenever I can counsel or assist—"

"I understand," replied Adeline, whilst a deep blush was followed by paleness on her

cheek. "I perfectly understand, we are to be friends, and friends we shall ever be, I hope." She rose as she spoke. "Only friends!" she thought to herself. "I am sorry you have returned through all this burning sun," she added, with a forced calmness. "I shall see you to-morrow at Lady Hippisley's." And trying to smile as she extended her hand, she turned into the walk which led to the house. Eustace stood as if entranced, gazing after her as if he had parted not to meet again,—then clasping his hands with momentary but severe suffering, he hurried across the park.

Adeline repaired to the dining-room, with so preoccupied a mind that she scarcely noticed anything, nor was sensible to any impression, until, after eating a very good luncheon, Mr. Bernal, she found, was wishing her good morning. She could not make out why Mr. Gadsden remained.

But the truth soon appeared. His moral courage, considerably strengthened by several glasses of such port wine as he had not tasted, he said to Mr. Bernal, since he had dined, after his ordination, with the Bishop of —, Mr. Gadsden prepared to do justice to womankind, to make reparation for his long indifference to the sex,—to make, in short, an offer of

marriage. He began metaphorically, — about finding himself in a wood and not knowing the way out, unless helped out by one fair hand. Could Mrs. Floyer tell him whose that fair hand was? no she could not. Then he must come to the point himself.

Just as he began to approach the important subject, when he had got no farther, in general, than his own notions on the subject of matrimony, which were virtually these,—that obedience was made for woman, imperative sway for man ;—industry and self-denial were for woman ; ease, comfort, a bottle of port, a pair of easy slippers, the only easy chair, and a good fire for man ;—that woman was to shiver at a distance from the fire in winter, man to stand with his back to it, and shade it from every one else ; that a good hot dinner was made for man, cold meat for women and children ; men were to wear stockings, women to mend them ; that his own especial nutshell of a mind was to guide and govern, his wife to admire, and acquiesce ;—in short, when he had made out a sort of Mahomedan existence for his noble small self, Mrs. Floyer did begin to perceive what the Curate was preluding about, and to what all this preamble must lead. She was obliged to listen ; and had she not been very

unhappy she might have been amused, for the creature set a high value upon his own natural perfections as a man, and upon his own acknowledged superiority as *the* man, the man for whom ladies had been dying ever since he was ordained. The animal only five-feet-five high, must have a tall woman, elegant,—handsome,—rich,—sensible,—very prudent, very amiable, and with all this, devoted to him; ready to sacrifice her time, money, health, conversation to Mr. Gadsden.—But Adeline had no patience to hear the rest of the confession; neither have I to write it. Such men there were, and are, in melancholy villages, where the light of modern reason, which has brought men down from the station of bashaws to something below, perhaps, what they ought to be, for women have the day now;—but such men are not worth the honour of contempt.

CHAPTER VII.

When remedies are past, the griefs are ended ;
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
Is the best way to bring new mischief on.

Othello.

HELEN HIPPISEY, the plain Helen, awkward in person, and abrupt in manner, had captivated a rich Welsh widower, a baronet, with a large fortune and a large family.

ment of friendship and admiration for the unaffected Helen; and if there were a chance, a possibility of his uniting himself to either of the Miss Hippisleys, it would have been to Helen. Men of sense,—I speak not of boys from eighteen to five-and-twenty, during their age of detestability, during which critical season, as Carlisle says, they ought to live under a tub; men who are worth the trouble of falling in love with, and the fuss and inconvenience of being married to, and to whom one might, after some inward conflicts and a course, perhaps, of fasting and self humiliation, submit to fulfil those ill-contrived vows of obedience which are exacted at the altar—such men want for their wives, companions, not dolls; and women who would suit such men are just as capable of loving fervently, deeply, as the Ringlettina full of song and sentiment, who cannot walk,—cannot rise in the morning,—cannot tie her bonnet-strings;—faints if she has to lace her boots;—never in her life brushed out her beautiful hair,—would not for the world prick her delicate finger with plain sewing, but who can work harder than a factory girl upon a lambswool shepherdess, traced in Lambert's incomparable designs; dance like a dervish at Almack's, ride like a

foxhunter, and, whilst every breath of air gives her cold, in her father's gloomy country house, and she cannot think how people can endure this climate, she can go out to dinner-parties, in February or March, with an inch of sleeve, and half a quarter of boddice.

Miss Annabella was one of this description of young maidens ; all the bounty of Nature, as far as brain was concerned, had been exhausted on her elder sister, and beauty made little amends for the absence of true feeling, judgment, self-control, and exertion, — not that this was Lady Hippisley's opinion.

“Helen will suit Sir Thomas exactly, for he is a man devoted to sheep and Sunday-schools, — the friend of cattle, and a great manager of the county infirmary, and all that sort of thing. I believe he even takes an interest in the prisons — very extraordinary ; but my poor little Bella would be immolated if she were destined to marry such a man. *She* requires heart, head, looks — a man of superior understanding, and most thoroughly the gentleman, which Sir Thomas, *entre nous*, is *not*, though an excellent man, a good Christian, I've no doubt, a most exemplary husband to his first wife — which promises well — a superior landlord, I'm told ; then such a father ! — such a son !”

Mr. Floyer, to whom Lady Hippisley addressed this long speech, had seen the beginning, middle, and end of Sir Thomas ap Thomas in his heroics. He had seen, first, that the baronet, who was descended from Seth, or some of those antediluvian heroes, was looking out for a wife. Secondly, he had remarked, that the eye of the ap Thomas had rested first on Bella. Lastly, it had proved that the ancient Briton had decided on giving his hand to Helen. How cordially Eustace had approved his choice it was not for him to say.

“Tremendous undertaking, this wedding,” resumed Lady Hippisley. “Helen’s so stupid about choosing her dresses—indeed, she leaves it all to me. There she is, walking with Sir Thomas all over the farms hereabouts, inquiring about threshing-machines, or, what is much the same thing, investigating the new methods at Mrs. Floyer’s school. Both she and Sir Thomas are prodigiously taken with Mrs. Floyer—you’ve spilt your ink, Mr. Floyer, you’ve spoilt your letter. Look at them now!—there—see how happy they are making themselves on the terrace—how loud *he* laughs! No, he wouldn’t suit Bella. Where are you going to, Mr. Floyer?—not to spoil the *tête-à-tête*?”

“Oh, no! I was merely—” Eustace did not finish his sentence, but dashed out of the window and disappeared among the shrubberies.

“Now what,” thought Lady Hippisley, “can that melancholy face,—those remarkably low spirits mean? not that he has been in good spirits all the winter, but he told me that he should be better when he came to Woodcote; for my part I think he is worse. ’Tis a pity Sir Francis opened to him about our affairs, though he did behave so generously—it may have injured Bella’s cause. Poor Bella!—she can’t conceal what she feels—it is out of the question.”

It was, happily, a fine morning when Sir Thomas ap Thomas, Baronet of some unpronounceable hall in the regions then pronounced by Lady Hippisley to be scarcely Christian, and Helen, eldest daughter of Sir Francis Hippisley, of some half-a-dozen places, and master of none, save a hired and ready-furnished house, gave each other the ren-counter in the village church of —.

Weddings are farces in the present day, but in former times they were five-act comedies, absurd in themselves, but enacted with the dignity of tragedies. What protracted torture

they are! of course the bridegroom must be kept waiting at the church-door by all the rules of propriety and decorum that ever yet were thought of. (Why cannot the worthy couple walk to church together honestly, arm-in-arm, as the poor folk do, and come back quietly like sane people, and say nothing more about it?) Then the poor bridegroom—for once in his life, or, as in Sir Thomas's case, twice—must be made a sight of. Fancy a man of Sir Thomas ap Thomas's staid demeanour, agricultural importance, fatherly character, and remarkable plainness of person, in a white satin waistcoat and trowsers. Then the carriages, the plumes, the nosegays, the variety of varieties which go to church along with the destined pair, who are about to enter upon the most solemn, responsible, and awful duties of life: it is but a completion of a sort of apotheosis that has been going on for weeks,—the female divinities — dressmakers; the male — tailors, jewellers, and hairdressers.

I spare the reader the wedding breakfast—a thing most hateful in nature—I spare him or her the awful preparatory interval in the drawing-room; the gentlemen in one group, the ladies in another, as if they were mutually fearful of the thing being infectious—the bride

between the bridesmaids on one sofa — the bridegroom, somewhat ashamed of being civil, and afraid of being thought cold—the mammas on the opposite couch—the fathers looking at the weather-glass, and reckoning the number of stages which the condemned pair must go that day—impelled, as Sir Francis Head says, the instant they are married to fly from one end of Europe to another. I spare the reader these, hoping myself ever more to be spared witnessing the reality.

Then the speeches — the toasts, which were given in those times, a health never being drunk in silence — let us try to forget them all. Two people there were who sat as if proscribed of fate—as if the scene were harrowing to them—as if sympathy were changed into bitterness. Nor did the gloom of these two wretched ones pass unnoticed. “I impute *her* looks,” said Lady Hippisley, glancing at Adeline, “to her own unfortunate marriage; this cannot be a pleasant scene to *her*; but, Eustace, — has Bella said anything unkind to him?”

Mrs. Stanhope Floyer overheard every syllable that her ladyship uttered; she could not help hearing it. Is involuntary listening a crime? I suppose so, for, true to the old adage, it generally punishes itself.

“Yes, there *has* been an attachment,” was Lady Hippisley’s answer to a question put to her. There is on her side an attachment, certainly—and on his, from his whole conduct this summer, I have no doubt. That will be the next thing of the sort you will hear of.”

An elderly gentleman now arose to speak. He was rich and liberal, and was well listened to; besides, he was an uncle of Lady Hippisley’s, grand-uncle of Helen’s, and his affections, like some hereditary diseases, had stopped one generation, to settle the more devotedly on another. He was very partial to Lady ap Thomas.

He made a short, uneasy speech, in a low, embarrassed tone; and during the process of bringing out his ideas he was obliged to be propped up with a glass or two of madeira. But he spoke with the solemnity of affection, he spoke with the pathos of one who had known life’s joys and troubles; tears ran down his face as he wished his dear, dear Helen, all that the tenderest affection, the most prosperous circumstances, the fairest hopes could give her—and there was an emphasis in the wishes, a depth of feeling, that even the father’s “Many happy returns of the day

to you, Lady ap Thomas!" or the brother's "Here's to you, Nell!" had not conveyed.

Some one arose ere the speech was quite done; Lady Hippisley looked round—it was Adeline, who hurried out of the room, begging no one to follow her, and who hastened into the fresh air—there her tears flowed freely.

People are very officious on such occasions, and some half dozen of ladies ran into the garden after Mrs. Floyer; but they were dispersed, and startled like a covey of partridges, flew back to the house, by the voice of one who claimed a relation's privilege to conduct Mrs. Floyer to her carriage.

"And, positively, you won't stay to see them drive off?" asked a maiden sister of Lady Hippisley.

"I will do whatever is thought polite," replied Adeline; "and no one need stay with me."

But Eustace still remained, and they were left alone together, she sitting on a campstool, he standing. After a silence of some moments, Adeline looked up at him: a smile lighted up her sweet face. She took his hand—it grasped hers firmly.

"I have heard to-day, Eustace, what ought to make me happy:—let me wish you joy! I understand there is an attachment, a mu-

tual attachment between you and Miss Hippisley. God grant it may bring much comfort to you both! I thought it would be so:—I expected it.”

“There is no happiness of that kind in store for me!” replied Eustace mournfully. He drew her hand near to him, and rested it on his arm. “Can you walk home? Will it distress you to walk with me, and to leave this gay party?”

“Gay, do you call it?” replied Adeline involuntarily. “Yet, will it not seem odd,” she added, blushing, “for us to leave the scene together?”

Eustace coloured deeply also:—“Surely not, for relations, Adeline!”

“Yes, relations, certainly,” said Adeline, rising as she felt a sort of rebuke to her own inmost feelings conveyed in this word.

“I have much to say to you,” Eustace began, as they found themselves under the shade of the stately beeches of an old park, walking under the trees in the direction, but somewhat out of the way, of Woodcote.

Adeline waited for some time for the intimation which was to follow this preface; but the “much to say” declined into the total silence of an abstracted and melancholy man.

It was only a mile to Woodcote, and the walk seemed all too short to those whose hearts were in accordance, — to whom it was a happiness to breathe the same air, see the same objects, and yet who had not a word, save on the most common-place subjects, and in the most common-place phrases, to “throw at” each other.

When they had entered the gates of Woodcote Grange, crossed its glades, besprinkled as they were with the gaudy flowers and graceful grasses of June, — as they gained the pleasure-grounds, and stood near to the cloister where often, so often, they had walked arm-in-arm, where converse and sympathy and relation-like familiarity had cherished and strengthened an affection, which neither had discovered, in its infancy, to be guilt, — Adeline found herself disengaged from her companion. She looked up into his face; there was an expression of poignant misery on the countenance that she loved to look at, — on that countenance whose kind smile had, in years of trial, been her support and solace, — on whose nobler expressions she had dwelt with pride and admiration: but now, as she gazed, a sentiment of alarm and distress disturbed her earnest and affectionate look.

Eustace did not, as he had done of late,

withdraw his eyes from those of Adeline, but fixed them on hers with grief, and more than grief, compassion: in his generous heart, feeling for her was superior to distress on his own account.

“You were worthy of a happier fate, Adeline,” he began involuntarily — then he broke off suddenly.

“But I am, I *am* happy! Eustace, you terrify me beyond measure! — what has happened? — what secret source of vexation can you have? Do not be afraid,” Adeline continued, seeing that Eustace became much agitated, — “do not be afraid, I can bear every trouble, — loss of fortune, loss of friends, if *you* are with me.”

Eustace wrung her hand. “I cannot, Adeline, I cannot tell you what you must know. Mr. Powell will come to you, — he will tell you better than I can: he will advise you. You have a strong, a religious mind,” he added, in broken accents.

“But what?”

“Nothing! — nothing, only that I must leave you,” replied Eustace, recovering himself. “Excuse all apparent inconsistencies, and much seeming unkindness. I have not been well of late.”

“And would you, Eustace, hasten from

the only person who has a right to soothe and cheer you? Are we not relations, dear, *dear* Eustace? Yet go," said Adeline, after a moment's consideration,—“ I will believe that you have some good reason; I will acquiesce in what you wish to do. Go, now: it will seem strange your being here. We shall meet again to-morrow. Why do you still hold my hand, Eustace? Why do you stay? Nay, it is not I who keep you now. Yet, wait one instant. I have such a presentiment,—so strange a conviction that you have something painful to tell me,—if you could; coupling, too, your absence from me all this winter,—your never writing. Eustace, is it your marriage that you dread communicating to me?”

“ No.” Eustace spoke promptly, but his frame shook as he answered the question. “ I am condemned by circumstances,—by my own wishes, *never* to marry. There was a time when I placed all my hopes of happiness on that prospect of domestic peace which no man, Adeline, can well dispense with. Those hopes are over for ever! *You* know I entertained them once. Let us think of those times no more. There will come a period to both of us,—to me I feel it is fast approaching, for

care and blighted hopes have made me prematurely old, — when calmness and a joyless indifference will render our meeting, our sharing the same pleasures, *safe*. Till then, — you may less require the discipline, — we must not meet.”

“There can be but one obstacle,” cried Adeline, “to the love you have so often professed.” She stopped short; she tried in vain to utter the word. Her lips moved, but the sound died away: at last, with an effort, she pronounced the word “*Stanhope!*”

“Mr. Powell will tell you,” said Eustace, becoming very pale, — “*I cannot.*” He would have turned from her, but as she sat gasping, pallid, in all the agony of suspense, he could not leave her. “This much:—*Stanhope lives!*”

“Have I then been guilty of a great crime?” exclaimed Adeline, in a voice of horror — “and you, Eustace” — she covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly — “I have been your bane!” In a few moments she recovered herself. “Let us part: — go from me. Send Mr. Powell, as you said: ’tis the best thing. Farewell!”

She rose to leave the room: then a sense of all her wretchedness came back to her.

Then her tortured soul broke forth its bonds of prudence: the voice of Nature would be heard. The abandoned, the injured, yet enthralled wife, recoiled from her bonds, and in the frenzy of grief she spoke:—

“I cannot see him!” she cried passionately: “he has no claim on my affection. I cannot receive him to a heart which he has spurned. I will not be the slave of one who has left me for another: no vows can bind me to that! Eustace, save me from that!—protect, — shelter me! I loved him once!” she added, sighing, as she raised her clasped hands to her brow, “but he left me, ignorant of his fate, —and, when I knew of his existence, it was to hear that he had deserted me for one who was the first author of our misery. Where can I hide myself?”

The sight of her sorrow, these expressions of her anguish, completely subdued the firmness of Eustace. He groaned as he buried his face in his hands, —for the lovely and affectionate being, thus fated to a miserable alliance with guilt and indifference, had long been the object not only of a devoted attachment, but of the highest admiration and respect.

Adeline was the first to regain her composure.

“ I forgot,” she said emphatically : — “ I forgot : — I was the arbiter of my own fate : — and I must bear my lot. It is for you, — you, Eustace ! ” She went up to him, took his hand between hers — “ Farewell ! ” The bitter grief with which that ominous word is often uttered never had a sterner throb than that which accompanied the sound as it fell from the lips of Adeline.

CHAPTER X.

O visions ill foreseen ! Better had I
Lived ignorant of future ! so had borne
My part of evil only, each day's lot
Enough to bear !

Paradise Lost.

It was all explained. Mr. Russell came to

of, was to be reserved for the work of faith: he was to be spared that the hand of God might be shown. His glass had not yet run; the pitcher at the fountain was doomed to be broken, but not yet.

“I remember,” said Mr. Powell to Adeline, whilst, weeping and humiliated, she sat by the good clergyman, “that when I strove to reconcile you to the death of this sinning fellow-mortal, when I bade you believe and submit, you could not kiss the rod; you could not support the anguish, — you wished to die.”

“I am punished: by a life of fear! — a yoke which I dread! — days without the solace of one hope! Ah, let me not think of the future!”

“So changing are our wishes, so unstable our motives,” returned Mr. Powell. “But, if you heard that he who had wronged you was in misery; — that his means had been lavished by guilty companions; — that debt, that mill-stone, dragged him down, impelling him to wretched expedients, or driving him from place to place, fearful of every whisper, trembling at every sound; — if you knew that the child of luxury, the being of enervated habits and unbounded desires, had been immured in a prison, and was —”

“ Ah, torture me not! Do not think it necessary to paint such sufferings in such colours!—gladly shall he have all—anything that I can give. Do you think that I can hesitate an instant?—that it can require persuasion? Were he not my husband he would still be Stanhope—my early betrothed! Tell me how I can contribute to his respectability and comfort,—what sacrifice will ensure them?”

“ Then there is affection still?” replied Mr. Powell, looking stedfastly at Adeline. “ I have but one council: receive the prodigal back, and restore him to his station.”

“ *I cannot!* Sir, there are wrongs which an injured wife, though bound to forgive, cannot obliterate from her heart. The pure may not dwell with the impure. Oh, urge that question no more!”

“ I believed, when I put it to you, that wounded affection, or pride, formed a barrier between you and happiness. If I am mistaken,—if the desertion of years has effaced that early fondness, I will not repeat that advice. I have had a communication from Mr. Stanhope Floyer. I wish I could say that I could wholly believe the expressions of penitence, and promises of reformation con-

tained in it,—but there *were* promises, — there were expressions of contrition.”

“—Does my duty,” asked Adeline, trembling, “require from me that I should be reunited to — to a man who has long lived with another —yes, until the grave closed over her:—is the duty of a wife, so deserted, still to endeavour to reclaim, — to receive back the penitent? Oh God! I am unfit for such an office. He left me long; I believed him to be dead; the human heart is not proof against — what shall I call it? — temptation, — no! for there must first be a consciousness of guilt. I have daily contemplated all that is noble, honourable, and amiable. I cannot return to Stanhope!”

Mr. Powell listened in silence. Though not in the confidence of either party, he saw, as plainly as words could have indicated, that there was another person also whose hopes of happiness were wrecked. A little of worldly wisdom formed the alloy (there is in all some alloy) in the fine ore which composed Mr. Powell’s character. He was passionately attached to Eustace Floyer; he admired, with the enthusiasm which belongs to strong, peculiar minds, the gentle heroism, simplicity, and generosity of Adeline. He thought, and he thought justly, that their happiness was irre-

trievably bound up in each other; and he saw no reason why law — English law, which protects the weak, and is peculiarly adapted for the visitation of woman's sins upon her head, — should not sometimes be resorted to to punish those of man. Mr. Powell was a liberal thinker on these points.

“If such be your disgust and terror, — if such — I presume not to inquire your inmost sentiments — there is a remedy for your case.”

He paused, and awaited the eager question of Adeline, — “What remedy?” — a question looked, not uttered.

Mr. Powell pointed out to her that the obligation of remaining faithful to a contract of marriage was, by Scriptural authority, annulled in certain circumstances: he recalled to her recollection, — for a woman who had lived much in the world could not be ignorant of such matters, — that the virtuous and upright might, by the most respected authority, be released, legally, from their bonds — upon proof.

Adeline laid her hands upon the clergyman's arm: — “Stay!” Her colour rose, and her eyes glistened with an expression very unusual to them, as she spoke. “I have

heard enough: such counsels are not new to me; they were once given by one who is now at rest, — my father. I respected his feelings; I knew his sufferings when he saw a daughter, whom he had cherished so fondly, spurned by her husband. But, Mr. Powell, talk not to me of woman's virtue, nor of woman's delicacy, when she can blazon her wrongs, — wrongs which she should shrink from naming — in a court of law. Proclaim it to the ears of men! — let me die first! Proof! — oh, how I shrink from the word! — proof of what? — proof of what modesty should blush to name. How, after such disclosures as those to which you allude, a woman can face the world, or take her place among those whose esteem is worth the thinking of, I know not: I could not. But more," resumed Adeline, the energy of her manner subsiding into a softened tone, "I would not proclaim his disgrace. No! it must be wrung from me ere I would. We loved each other once; but were it not so, I gave him my hand, — I pledged my vows before my God, — I bear his name, — he is my husband. No! if the price to pay for freedom is the exposure of my husband's errors, the branding of his name, let me be his slave!"

"You are right," returned Mr. Powell,

whilst tears moistened his eyes. "Society rightly treats such cases, acquitting, but not honouring women who seek such remedies. There is a tacit reproof in the humiliating sympathy, the half notice, or the abandonment to obscurity which a wife, under such circumstances, receives. Let me now consider how best I can arrange all things to promote your happiness."

"See that he is well provided for," replied Adeline, "and spare me, if you can, income enough to stay here. This place is very dear to me, and I hold it but in trust for Mr. Floyer. One stipulation alone I would make."

"And what is that?"

"That my husband comes not within a fixed distance of Woodcote Grange."

"It shall be observed."

"Here, then," said Adeline, looking around her, "I may still feel at home. One word more:—tell him we meet not on this side of the grave, except, Mr. Powell, it should please God to chasten and visit him with ill health, or any severe mental affliction. I cannot think the course that that ill-fated being has run, can have been persevered in with impunity. If he should be ill, — if he should ever wish to see me" — she wept as she spoke — "no

hand but mine shall smooth his pillow. If, on the contrary, it should so happen, Mr. Powell, that *I* should by any untimely illness be hurried away, remember, in such case, you assure him that he had my forgiveness. See that all is secured to Mr. Stanhope Floyer, so that in case of my death he may have a maintenance befitting his former rank in society. I will do all that you suggest; and now — let us speak on this subject no more.”

Mr. Powell assured Adeline that all she wished should be observed; and taking leave, he walked towards Northington, revolving in his mind the recent conversation. He reflected on the singular position in which Mrs. Stanhope Floyer was placed; even his fastidious mind could find nothing to censure in her conduct. He reflected, also, that if the conduct of women, under similar circumstances, were guided by the same forbearance, much scandal, disclosures which familiarize the mind to the worst details of vice, loss of all peace of mind, the severing of the child from its mother, the breaking up of family ties, mortification, sometimes penury, and always some portion of obloquy, right or wrong, might be warded off from the injured wife.

And how, may it be asked, is a woman to

conduct herself who discovers the infidelity of her husband? not to expose his errors, certainly—nor to separate, except when reformation is hopeless. When the habits are so depraved that no moral improvement can be expected, save from the direct interposition of a miracle, a woman who abstains from vindictive conduct, who is moderate, yet firm, might generally succeed in making amicable and comfortable arrangements, for a man who dreads exposure will accede to much to save his character. Let the only confidants of her sorrows be her parents, brothers, or sisters: nor let her be too much guided even by their advice. The beautiful precepts of St. Paul will teach her the benefit of mild and moderate treatment of sinners; let her not aggravate her melancholy fate by blazoning it forth to the world: if she spare her husband from disgrace she may yet hope for peace, respectability, and freedom from self-reproach.

CHAPTER XI.

Be mine to love the fields, the woods, the rills,
And rushing floods that shine among the hills !
Unknown by fame, my tranquil years to spend,
Where plains in wide luxuriant pomp extend !

WILLIAMS'S *Greece*.

MR. POWELL took a post-chaise at Northington, and proceeded to Cabbington, a village at about seven miles' distance, where he hoped to complete his mission of peace. Excellent as a pastoral minister, of inflexible integrity, and endowed with strong practical sense, Mr. Powell was not a man of refinement. He had sprung from an humble origin ; had been admitted at Oxford upon an exhibition from a free school ; his next step in the world was to a fellowship ; then a school and a curacy formed his commencement in life. He had had the infinite honour, for a half year or so, of receiving at his house the late Sir Horace Wentworth, to pick at Latin, and gather up a few crumbs of accounts. The young baronet

took cold, and was not allowed to go again to the retired and damp village where Mr. Powell resided; but this was an introduction, and Sir Horace's progenitor took a fancy to the hard-headed, blunt, and able Mr. Powell. His induction to the living of Coughton had been the result of this fortunate circumstance.

Mr. Powell rattled briskly along to Cubbington, looking around him from time to time, to note some old remembered traces of former days. He found, as all do who return to the haunts of their youth, melancholy changes; the trees which had overspread the lane were pollards now, the village green was partly built over, the ale-house was an inn, the once lowly, rustic parsonage, a tall, stiff, new-fronted house: nothing remained the same except the church, its grey tower rising calmly above the grasp of innovation, its fanes glittering in the sun; steady and durable like the Faith which hallows its aisles, stood the old edifice, whilst around it all was change,—the graves, crumbling into an undistinguishable heap; the mouldering bones beneath those grass-grown sods; the cold forms, brought hither to be entombed; all, save the moss-grown pile, with its symbol, the cross,—all was change, change.

There was a different inn-keeper, a new hostler, a "boots" unknown to Mr. Powell, or to his kindred; the octogenarian clergyman, with his curled wig and cocked hat, was walking about his garden, "living to live," almost in his dotage. The affairs of the parish were managed by his young wife and the curate.

Mr. Powell stopped to make himself known to the old gentleman, who remembered him well, because he had not seen him for some thirty years. The venerable rector's grey eye, and smile, reminded Mr. Powell of his early loves and disappointments, for even he had had such imaginary troubles once, and a reminiscence of the rector's fair, gentle daughter, whose loveliness and goodness had first awakened in Mr. Powell's heart the ambition to belong to the clerical profession; she—where was she? He looked around, and the garden flowers recalled her bending form, for amongst them she lived—and died. 'Twas now some five and twenty years since the aspiring scholar of the free school—become a vicar—had visited his native parish, and had seen her who had prompted the exertions of his youth and manhood, carried out into that pleasant shady garden—and the holly-hocks looked the same as when she had sat there to breathe the fresh

air, and to be warmed by the noon-day sun, and to pass the live-long day. And the man, long since married, and happily too, and a busy and useful member of society, remembered, with a throb of pain, the thrill which that sad sight, the close of all his aims and hopes, had caused; his love had been untold; and it remained untold, perhaps unknown,—with her it died.

The clergyman drove on to a farm-house, to shake hands with an old friend there, Mr. Thomas Darnford, the father of Miss Emma, and the father-in-law of Mr. Bernal, of Northington, for the marriage had taken place that very morning; and the bells had only just done ringing. The father-in-law had put down a handsome sum of money, and a substantial dinner was being provided for the young couple and their friends. There was a great deal of tittering, and white dresses were peeping out of one of the arbours in the garden—in the other a party of the bridegroom's friends were smoking: Mr. Gadsden was walking about on the thrift-edged gravel-walks with the Curate of Cabbington; a sort of subdued, enduring air had replaced the self-consequence of the Curate of Northington; and, with respect to young ladies, he had begun to regard

them as vipers. He confined his attentions entirely to a middle-aged lady, who, not living in the days of Queen Victoria, had begun life with a cast in her eye, and ended her existence with the same, a proof of the barbarism and want of gallantry of former days, when surgeons did not give themselves the trouble to study what might beautify the ladies; whereas, now, so chivalrous are the immortal Brodie, Copland, Liston, Farquhar, that it must be their own fault if people do not look straight forward, and the *contretems* that one remembers, of gentlemen asking one partner to dance, and looking at another—and sometimes more tender and important solicitations falling ambiguous, when there was a want of unanimity between the two eyes of an interesting and enamoured swain, can now rarely occur.

Mr. Gadsden drew the Curate back once or twice, to say, "What a calamity Miss Portman's eyes are! it makes me quite nervous and ill to look at them; otherwise, she's a particularly sensible woman, — a very sensible woman."

"Yes; and," the Curate remarked, "with a sensible fortune too." And the lady and Mr. Gadsden continued to walk together.

They both remarked on the vulgarity of

the party; on the pity it was to see the younger Miss Darnfords such sad flirts; on the melancholy state of society in that village; the change Miss Portman found there, and everywhere. (Surely England must have been a Paradise once; every place according to every account is changed for the worse.) When she went to Bath, there was such a change—there was such a falling off in the balls and sedans; in her own neighbourhood there was scarcely a person left to talk to; the clergy—what would they do without the clergy?

“Talking of the clergy,” said Miss Portman, (“just look at the expensive texture of Mrs. Bernal’s veil; the farmers’ daughters do dress so!) there’s a curious thing happened at Iretton, where my sister Gumley is married to the rector of the parish: there’s a poor half-starved curate of my brother Gumley’s—a man who has been a curate and will be a curate all his life. Well, this individual, who could hardly afford salt to his porridge, has had an inmate thrust upon him lately, an old college friend, who came and begged a lodging. Do you know the name?—Floyer.”

“Remarkably well; uncommonly well,” replied Mr. Gadsden, colouring, and breathing fast. “You have no particular meaning in that question, Miss Portman?”

“None in the least, Mr. Gadsden, except that in all questions there must be some particular meaning,” answered the old maid sharply. “There’s an old family of that name, I know, for my sister Gumley has a servant who lived formerly with Mrs.—Mrs. Stanhope Floyer? Is there such a person?”

Mr. Gadsden drew himself up with the impression: This is a snare—but he bowed affirmatively to the question. “Let me take care not to commit myself,” was his internal ejaculation.

“What relation Mr. Floyer is to Mrs. Stanhope Floyer I don’t know, but old Sarah, my sister Gumley’s housemaid—we had best turn out of the way of hearers—declares that he is Mrs. Stanhope Floyer’s husband.”

“—Husband! Good heavens! what have I escaped!” was Mr. Gadsden’s exclamation. “Hus—husband! Now, this has been a plot, a snare of Mrs. Stanhope Floyer’s to entice me into—I won’t commit myself by even thinking the word.”

“But I must tell you, he goes by another name. He’s a poor shattered creature, though once a fine man, and the curate shelters him, just because he has no other home. My sister Gumley sends veal broth, and calves’-head

jelly down to Mr. Martin's; things suitable to poor Mr. Floyer's state of health."

"Is he indisposed, then?" asked Mr. Gadsden, trying to look calm.

"Not seriously, but sufficiently to make my sister Gumley, who manages the parish, look into it. I don't know whether you approve of Huxham's bark, or whether you like the tincture. My sister Gumley—"

"Widows are so artful," Mr. Gadsden muttered to himself, and his thoughts recurred to the widow of Summer Hill—old maids rose in the estimate.

"They are going to dance, I see; do you dance, Mr. Gadsden?"

"Not in warm weather; and upon ordinary occasions." ("She can't mean to dance at her time of life," thought the curate.)

"Indeed! 'tis a diversion I'm uncommonly fond of: most young people are. As mamma often says to me, Maria Portman, you'll dance to your grave."

"Surely not," said Mr. Gadsden. (Not unlikely, he secretly reflected.) "For you've too much good sense, I am sure, to dance when you get into years. The music's uncommonly pretty, is it not?"

"Oh, dear, yes, that tambourin is such an

addition ;—I'm so particularly fond of dancing to the tambourin. You've a good ear, I dare say, Mr. Gadsden, and dance in time. Some people can never be taught to dance in time. Mamma used to say to me,—Maria if the whole room is out, you 're sure to be in time."

"A mother's partiality, no doubt," thought Mr. Gadsden.

"That 'Tink-a-tink' is a charming new air, comes in so well in 'Blue Beard.' How completely your figure is cut out for dancing, Mr. Gadsden !"

They now stood near the dancers, who had formed themselves into two files, like soldiers about to engage in action, upon the green, under a large walnut tree. The figure was hands four round, and pousette ; and Mr. Gadsden thought he could manage that. The curate of Cabbington was leading off with one of the bride's-maids, and Mr. Powell was standing opposite to the bride's mamma. Even a couple of great-aunts were enlisted into the the service, and Mr. Gadsden began to think there would be no peculiarity in Miss Portman's dancing ; but, then, to stand opposite to her ! To have to meet one eye at a time as he turned in the pousette !—he looked at his shoes, fumbled out a glove ; somehow or other

he found himself shortly afterwards hands-four rounding it with Mr. Powell and the two great aunts.

Whilst this little unimportant scene was going on, there strolled down the village of Cabbington two young men, the one in a suit of rusty antique black, the other still with some remnants of fashion in his soiled and dilapidated garments. The face of the former was serene, healthy. He had been imprudent and improvident: he had known poverty and privation,—but never guilt; the countenance of the latter was beautiful from its symmetry, and the delicacy of complexion, even in absence of outward adornment, even in the manifest decline of strength, and under the abasement of the spirit.

This pair came opposite to the farm-house, manifest and loitered before the paling, looking in upon the cheerful scene. Who that had seen the elegant, the studied appearance of Stanhope Floyer in his days of health and luxury, who that could recal the lover of the innocent, the enamoured Adeline Floyer, the paramour of the poor wretch whose mouldering remains are laid in Northington church-yard,—could connect the two individuals together in his mind?

A few short years had done the work of

time. Ruin was marked on every fold of his dress, on every movement of his figure: ruin of mind, fortune, health. As the two friends moved away from the gate unobserved, a short hard cough denoted that the finger of death had pointed at its victim, calling forth from their latent home the seeds of that disease which laughs at medicine, and teaches humility to science. But, as yet the dread secret of his doom was undisclosed: the unthinking man knew not that his hours were numbered.

“Another victim—another slave,” he said, laughing, as he and his friend Martin strolled away from the farm-house. “I was a slave once; thank God”—(what a thing to thank God for)—“I am free now.”

“But it was a gentle thralldom, that of your wife, I mean, by your own acknowledgement;—she was good, beautiful, rich—”

“Ay, there you have it. She was very well. I should be wrong certainly to say anything against her,” added Stanhope Floyer, after walking on a few paces.

“Have you ever seen her since you were separated? I think you told me it was some years ago. Have you had no wish to see her, no curiosity?”

“Why—when, you know, a certain person was alive, it was impossible. Poor Helen! *She* was my ruin, certainly! My wife never could forgive *that*,—the only person I ever knew her jealous of. What I shall do I don't know, unless Mr. Powell brings a favourable answer. I can't poach upon your territories long, my good fellow; you are as poor myself. If she assists me, and I think she will,—I have every reason to think she will;—I shall provide for you, Martin.”

“Thank you! I do not buoy myself up with hopes of any great things. I shall be contented if you will take care of yourself, Floyer, and get rid of that cough, you have disturbed me with at nights.”

“Oh, that I'm sure to do; that is of no consequence. I never was ill in my life before, except once. I never had a cough in my life;—you're thinking of Helen. Now, don't be a fool! Helen's was a different case: hers was a broken-hearted sort of a complaint. She didn't like penury; for, I believe, if truth must be spoken, we came to that. She couldn't stand the loss of consequence and fashion; and sometimes, I think, the never seeing her boy fretted her. Helen's complaint was consumption.—What a deuced dull vil-

lage this is! When will Powell be back? What o'clock is it?"

"We shall see the church clock presently, when we have past that tree. I shall be glad when I can get my watch mended, it loses so," said Martin, pulling out an old silver article with a steel chain, — a time-piece, like the rest of the world, deceptive; misleading the curate so often, and playing him so false, that he resolved to treat it like an ungrateful friend, never to trust it again.

"You are better off than I am," said Stanhope Floyer, laughing, "though it is an antiquated piece of machinery, that watch of yours, Martin."

"All the better for that: it was my grandfather's, and my mother gave it me when I went to college, and a great deal of good advice along with it."

"Which you and I had many a laugh over, Martin. Thank God! I never had any trouble of that sort: a wife is quite enough."

"Excuse me," replied Mr. Martin, colouring, "I never laughed at my mother's advice: I never called nor thought — God bless her memory! — her solicitude about her worthless son, a trouble. I brought trouble enough upon her aged head, but I loved and honoured

her all the while. If I had followed her advice I shouldn't have been cursed with debts and difficulties, I shouldn't have been set down on a pitiful curacy all my days. But 'tis too late to repent now."

"Quite too late," said Stanhope Floyer. "—I begin to repent our having taken so long a walk, for I'm tired to death. Yet, what can we do all day in the house? It's an accursed thing having no horse."

"Lean on me, Floyer," exclaimed Martin, drawing within his the arm of his friend, — a friend who had been his bane, leading him at college into dissipation which might shake the foundations of the tree of aristocracy, but which had blasted, root and branch, the humble scion of lowly fortunes; neglecting him in prosperous days, in difficulties borrowing money from him, — money which the poor but honest curate wrung from his scanty pittance by many privations, — then coming — when all wealthier sources failed, when gay and rich friends confessed they "could do no more," — to ask a home, — a home willingly granted, to lay his head in, to shelter his fugitive steps, a home, wherein to breathe, perchance, his last sigh.

The household of the poor Curate had been

sorely disarranged ; his difficulties and privations had been increased by the visitation, —but who would have known that? Stanhope never thought about it, and Martin tried *not* to think ; for he loved Stanhope Floyer with the love that the pure, unchanged heart of sixteen bears to the schoolfellow, and carries on to college, — a love, next in its truth and constancy to that of woman ; partaking of the often mistaken and enthusiastic character of woman's love ; as self-forgetting, and perhaps more indiscriminating ; as fond, — almost as easily wounded, — as prompt to trust and to forgive ; nay, even as jealous : — with all the inconsistencies of woman's affection, too, contemning, yet enthralled. Years had separated the fashionable spendthrift from his early friend, yet poor Martin's heart had been true, — through many slights, through some provocation ; and his honest, independent spirit had seemed to rebel against the unkindness of neglect, and the cruelty of repeated slights, alas ! it was only seeming.

The friends proceeded through a field together, Stanhope, pale as death, leaning on Martin. It was very warm, and the path that they traversed did not skirt along the edge of the field, but led straight across it :

the only shade they had was from the wheat, now just turning, which almost shrouded the short, thick-set figure of Martin, reached not to the shoulder of Stanhope Floyd. At the end of the field they sat down to rest.

"Those accursed bells, what can they be jingling them so long for? Stupid fools! I wish, — I wish," added the invalid, looking down a lane which terminated the field, "if that old Powell would come back. I long to be what she says: I long to get money, — to get away. I shall be well the instant I set my foot in London."

"I am very sorry," said Martin dejectedly. "I cannot make you as comfortable as I wish. I am very sorry, — I don't care about it in general, — that my means are so small."

"Ah! so small, are they?" — There was a pause of some moments. The reckless invalid broke it by saying, "There's where it is, Martin. I am sorry to be a burden on you, you're poor enough without me. But be patient with me, my good fellow; it mayn't be long. Either, — either my wife will assist me, or I shall die of dulness, or the disease, perhaps, that croaking old fellow said I had, — though I don't believe him."

"Come, now, you're low," cried Mart

clapping his friend on the back ;—“and what good will that do? Let’s go home, and old Betty will get something to restore you. Don’t think about me, Stanhope. I have no incumbrances, — never shall have; and it’s hard enough if I can’t offer a crust to an old friend: it is but a crust, and you have been used to so much better fare. Oh, happier days will come! Do you think you are rested? Could you cross that meadow now? — then there is only old Dobson’s farm-yard.”

“And the pretty curtseying daughter:—let us try.”

They proceeded along a meadow, across which a path-way led directly to the village. Geese, and a pig or two, denoted the vicinity of this small enclosure to the haunts of men. The straggling, quiet village of Ireton, dotted about at the base of a hill, lay peacefully before them, still as if not a passion or a care had ever ruffled the animate creatures who vegetate near its rural haunts. The small lodging in which poor Martin lived was seated half-way up the hill.

Panting, the invalid toiled up the ascent: disease — that species of disease which gives to its victims an elevation of character which is universal — was borne by the irritable Stan-

hope Floyer with a patience very affecting to his friend.

“Lean your whole weight upon me, my dear fellow; don't be afraid of bearing me down: you're not so heavy as all that. Here we are at last; we must not take such walks in future.”

They crossed the strip of garden, the only thing the Curate had to be proud of,—and he *was* proud of it, — and the door (a glass door) of a very small sitting-room stood open to receive them. There was no sofa nor easy chair, only a very uneasy arm-chair; and Martin, observing that his friend was very much exhausted, fetched out of the bed-room above stairs a couple of pillows, and, with some ingenuity, propped up the head of the invalid.

“Here's your elixir something, Stanhope — a few drops.”

“No! — no physic! I abominate physic! — always did. Wine is my medicine, — or brandy, better. Now don't, Martin, offer me any of your home-made trash,” (seeing his friend reach something out of a cupboard in the corner of the room,) “I can't, — I won't drink it!”

Martin, with a look of despair and perplexity put the bottle back again, and sat down,

feeling his poverty at that moment more bitterly than he had ever in the course of his life done before.

“She lives in splendour and luxury,” muttered Stanhope Floyer to himself, laying, as people of ill-conditioned minds do, the blame at any door but his own. “She has health,—she hasn’t lost an atom of her strength, as I have.”

“How! have you seen her?” asked Martin hastily.

“Only a glimpse,—she fled away from the horrible wretch,—the poor broken-down sinner,” replied Stanhope Floyer, with a sudden burst of bitter feeling. He reclined, musing for some moments. “It was after Helen died,—I don’t know how, but a sort of babyish remorse seized me, you see—but ’t is of no use going over this same ground so often,—we have talked it over twenty times.”

“You never told me how you came to leave your wife at Coughton;—how you set out, and never went back—and why.” Mr. Martin turned as he spoke, to look at his friend. He had sunk to sleep, from exhaustion, instantaneously,—even in the midst of exciting topics. Martin closed the window, spread a large cotton, imitation-of-India-pattern, pocket-hand-

kerchief over his friend's head, to prevent his taking cold, and went out to work in his garden.

There the poor curate was happy; *there* he could think over the dictatorial sayings and doings of his rector, until he made up his mind whether to bear them any longer, or to go away. There he could recover little acts of pride and interference on the part of Mrs. Gumley; there, amid a profusion of flowers,—his flowers, reared with a skill to which *ennui* and seclusion had driven him as a resource,—the Curate could not feel poor. No one had such pinks as he had; his sweet-william was unrivaled,—he had only half a dozen geraniums, but then they were *such* geraniums,—the cottage, once an unsightly little mass of lath and plaster, was now besprinkled with roses; and then, his sweet peas were in bloom, and, fortunately for him who had not much to do, they required a great deal of sticking and tying.

The sun was somewhat on the decline, and Martin was watering away, supplied by a deep draw-well, over which a willow grew, when a friendly voice bade him "Good-day." Mr. Martin hastened to the gate to receive Mr. Powell, who, somewhat heated by the excite-

ment of the dance, had borrowed a horse, and ridden over to Ireton.

“ You are just come,” said the hospitable Curate, “ in time for tea,—Betty, get some tea,—yet stay, do not disturb Mr. Floyer; let us have it in my study, Betty. I’m remarkably sorry, sir, I cannot offer your horse house-room, but there’s good stabling at the Wheatsheaf, and, if you please, I’ll take it there myself.”

“ Oh, sir, the nag will stand. Suppose, for security’s sake, we just fasten it to the gate.”

“ —And give it a mouthful of grass,” said Martin, tearing up a handful of grass. “ I am sorry I have no hay, nor oats, but—”

“ Oh, my good fellow, don’t I remember being a Curate myself? ay, and a very poor one too, obliged to keep a horse and look genteel upon eighty pounds a-year. And then, with such a little Eden around you!—”

“ It is, it is,” said Martin eagerly, “ a miniature Paradise; but we want rain, sir,” looking despondingly at some drooping larkspur. “ This way, Mr. Powell; my friend has fallen asleep from fatigue. Have you any good news for him?” Mr. Martin, as he spoke, led the rector, with much ceremony, into a small square room, bestrewn with books, which, in truth, were its chief furniture. A picture, in

crayons, of a thoughtful hard-featured looking man, Mr. Martin's father, graced, indeed, the chimney-piece. He had been a man of business in a country town, and his hard-earned gains had been devoted to making his "son a gentleman,"—a difficult task, as far as appearance was concerned, but the feelings, the actions of poor Martin might pass muster any where; real aristocracy of soul was displayed in the delicacy of mind, which recoiled from obligation and dependence, but which loved to confer benefits: and *situation* could not quench the nobleness and honesty of his nature.

The portrait in crayons was besprinkled round with sundry profiles, in black, relieved with gold strokes, the pedigree of Martin illustrated. There was his revered grandfather, his venerable grandmother, with a toopee head, and pigeon-breasted neckerchief,—there were sundry aunts and uncles, who had flourished in their generation, and with whom the good-natured curate had been an especial favourite; then there was a greatly treasured ebony snuff-box, mounted in silver; a pen worked over with worsted, and beneath the crayon picture a pocket Communion Service, the present of some former friend, displayed with as much pride as the humble, and humbled Curate *could* feel.

Betty, a hale old woman, with a cambric muslin cap, under which her dark hair was clubbed, and in a linsey-woolsey gown, tucked up behind, and showing a good rational pair of black stockings, laid over the little table a damask table-cloth; and presently a neat display of tea-things offered. The cream was of the richest description, a present from a neighbouring farmer, the butter was churned at the parsonage, and paid for, the bread was Betty's making. "But this," said Mr. Martin, uncovering a small dish, and showing some fine honey-comb, "is the result of our storming the hives last night."

He pointed as he spoke to some beehives, low-seated in a nook of the garden. From one of them emerged that soothing sound which denotes that the wanderers of the day were gathered to their home.

"Ah!" said Mr. Powell, helping himself freely, "very wholesome. Rather a change of scene this for your inmate, Mr. Floyer," he added, looking around at two chairs and a stool, which were pressed into the service of the tea-table, and which were indeed all that the room afforded.

"The air is wholesome. Indeed, Ireton air is famous; a poem was written upon it by a third

cousin of Lord Lyttleton's, I hear ; but still, poor Floyer coughs, and I fancy, as I watch him from this window, standing sometimes at the gate, his favourite place, that he grows thinner. I have tried all manner of decoctions, —balm-tea, my mother's recipe, and rue-tea, by which my aunt Topley has made no end of cures—but he won't drink it. Then, we've had the doctor to him."

"And what says he?"

The question was answered by another voice. "Don't you be talking about me, I'm awake, at your service, I don't intend to die at present, whatever you two may plan."

As the last words were uttered a figure, in height nearly filling up the humble doorway, appeared ; and the invalid stood before Mr. Martin and his visitor.

Mr. Floyer bowed with his habitual elegance of manner, then drew himself up,—perhaps the humiliating situation in which he found himself occurred to his mind ; for, as he looked at Mr. Powell a tinge of red flushed his cheek for an instant.

"Sit here, dear Stanhope," cried Martin, bustling about to make his friend comfortable, "—out of the draught. I was just coming to see if you would like to take your tea in your arm-chair."

“Thank you, I have had enough of the arm-chair; I am cramped to death; my bones ache. I suppose Mrs. Floyer wouldn't break her heart if she were to hear that I was ill, sir?”

“She wishes no ill to you, sir.” Mr. Powell paused for a few moments; his reflective eye rested upon the face of the unfortunate man, who he at that instant felt was sufficiently humbled and degraded without the additional humiliation of being indebted for his subsistence to a wife whom he had deserted. “I wonder whether he feels it,” was Mr. Powell's inward ejaculation.

But the question was very soon answered. When Mr. Powell announced that the most liberal instructions were given to him to settle all that could contribute to the respectability and comfort of Mr. Floyer, he received the solution of his doubts when he perceived that the generosity of an injured wife was accepted without a blush. Selfishness is the only vice that is unconscious of its own existence.

“I thought you would bring me good news,” said the invalid brightening up. “I suppose I can get a post-chaise and horses to-morrow, for not a day will I stay here now I have funds.” He crumpled up as he spoke one of

those portentous pieces of silver paper which Mr. Powell had brought, and thrust it into his waistcoat pocket.

"Take care of it," said Martin, with a wistful look at the note; "you sent a five-pound note to the wash one day, you know, in that very waistcoat."

"I dare say it was the same waistcoat, for I haven't a large assortment. I wonder whether old Crump is still in St. James's Street? I must find him out the very first moment I go to London. I think of going on to the Bath."

"—In order to secure your comfort, and to protect you, sir, from your creditors," said Mr. Powell in a loud voice, and very sternly, "Mrs. Stanhope Floyer will be obliged to make considerable reductions in her own expenditure;—she will part with her horses, her carriage, being the gift of her father, she will not sell, but she must only use it occasionally. She must leave Woodcote."

"Indeed! I am extremely concerned she should have to put herself to any inconvenience on my account. This is the worst of marriage; being coupled to another person, one is so responsible."

"I rather think you have had the best of the contract," replied Mr. Powell contemptu-

ously ; “ your responsibility for your help-mate has not been heavy. And pray, sir, may I ask, how long have you been with my good friend here ? ”

“ Three months, I believe, if I reckon according to the usual mode ;—if I count by protracted endurance—no offence, Martin—”

“ You are now a rich man, Mr. Floyer—Mr. Martin is not endowed with this world’s goods, it is in your power to return the hospitality shown you by Mr. Martin.”

“ Oh—true ;—Martin and I shall understand each other presently,” said Stanhope Floyer with a careless accent, but a sweet smile ; “ he shall not be poor whilst I am — as you are pleased to term it—rich.”

“ But, perhaps, Mr. Martin may sometimes find Ireton a little dull as well as yourself, Mr. Floyer. Perhaps he may fancy seeing a little of the world ; he would like a journey to Bath, may-be—”

“ So he may, and no bad idea—only, he’s such an old bachelor, he’ll take a month packing up his things, and stowing away his books. I *cannot* spend another week here.”

“ No, sir, you cannot—there is an especial reason why you *cannot* in that contract, which we must all sign before we part ; there is an

engagement that you come not within twenty miles of Mrs. Floyer's known residence,—forfeit this, and you forfeit your allowance.”

Mr. Powell spoke firmly, indeed peremptorily; he was sorry for it a few minutes afterwards. A look of mortification, even of sadness, on the countenance of Stanhope Floyer, warned the good but stern man that even the abandoned and selfish *have* feelings; and these the Saviour, who was sinless, hath taught us to spare, as he spared the broken-spirited Magdalen from reproof;—as he bade the detected sinner go, without a reproach, and—“sin no more.”

“So, she really is come to that!” said Mr. Floyer, after a pause of melancholy reflection, not unmixed with shame. “She wishes me dead too, no doubt. Let her be assured, sir, I shall not trouble her, or any one,—with my unbidden presence. I have an old friend here,” and he rested his hand on Martin's shoulder as he spoke, “who has never, as the saying is, turned the cold shoulder to me. Martin, my good fellow, throw up this accursed curacy; come and live with me—I have enough for both.”

“Thank you, Floyer, but I like my home, and my little independence of sixty pounds

per annum. I am accustomed to Mrs. Gumley now, and I am fond of my own little room, and my flowers, and old Betty."

The gentlemen agreed he had a capital taste; and Mr. Powell, with a few words, addressed to Mr. Martin, but containing some side-long advice to Mr. Floyer, took his leave. The sound of his horse's hoofs along the lane soon announced his departure from Ireton.

CHAPTER X.

Where is the maiden of mortal strain,
That may match with the Baron of Triermain ?

SCOTT.

THE bells of Coughton church, which scarcely ever sounded except to toll for service, were in full cadence when Mr. Powell reached his pastoral district ; the villagers were standing in groups on the green ; the club, that

Mr. Powell was travelling in an old phaeton, with hack horses, tandem-wise, and he drew up to one of his parishioners to ask, "Are they come home?"

"Not as yet, please your honour," was the reply; "but they can't be long: fires 'as been lighted these three days, and every room is opened—nor that he was murdered in."

"Ah, that's an old story—better not be revived, Simkins. So they have got the flag out on the top of the church! I never expected to see such days again at Coughton. Don't I hear carriage-wheels?"

"You do, your honour."

As he spoke a shout, issuing from lungs which had never breathed London smoke, deafened all those who did not shout. The club took off their hats;—the women screamed in ecstasy;—the charity children, endowed with the power of yelling, and improved by weekly practice in the church, sent up a shrill chorus to the calm skies;—dogs, half asleep, were aroused and barked;—horses neighed;—old women croaked out their blessings; the rooks flew away from the church top affrighted; two fresh hands were thrust into the belfry to aid the clamour *there*.

In the midst of this tumult, a carriage,

with arms emblazoned in every corner, favours on the horses' heads, four outriders, and postilions in the Tufton livery, turned slowly round the corner of the road which skirted the village green. The fair, and now round face of Millicent, once Mrs. Wentworth Lawson, was bent forward on the one side; on the other, the grey summit of Sir Tufton, be-powdered with unusual skill, bowed unremittingly, but with that air which said, "People, behold your master!" A beautiful boy, dressed in a costly suit, sat between the pair; and as the carriage passed Lady Tufton (for so was Millicent now bedight—to that proud eminence had she risen!) bent his little head down with her hand, and with gentle force made him bow to the villagers. The boy, handsome as he was, had a look of the Wentworths about him—the haughty bearing, the fine flashing eye of his grandmother; he was born with the curse of a proud spirit, poor boy! destined to be severely humbled. Lady Tufton soon drew in her head, for she could not avoid seeing, in the very centre of the church-yard, the sarcophagus where, underneath, mouldered the bones of a brother whom she had loved; but she quickly put out her hand, whilst Sir Tufton stopped

the carriage, to Mr. Powell, who drove up to wish her joy.

Sir Tufton bowed and laughed, and laughed and bowed, and hoped he should soon see Mr. Powell at the "House." "Strange," thought the rector, "the nature of some peoples' pride! Here's a man, who has such a sovereign contempt for all honest, plain people, married to the widow of a felon!"

He could not wonder more than Sir Tufton wondered himself; he, whose blood was so ancient that it was wonderful to think how such antiquity could centre at last in so small a compass!—he, who could never even think in any language so easily as in heraldic phrase, could now seldom take up a newspaper without seeing the words "gallows, gibbet, drop," things not to be put on an escutcheon, and yet to which he was now next in succession. The elements of Sir Tufton's character had been all his life at warfare with each other: the good had prevailed when he soothed Mrs. Lawson in her prison hours,—protected her when she quitted the awful scene,—supported her, when she emerged into society,—fell in love with her simple, patient character,—and began to think when he could do himself the injustice of proposing to her. The same good

genius prevailed, when, in a moment — such moments were rare—he forgot his Tufton and Tyrawley ancestors, and besought her to accept his hand, and what was called by courtesy his heart (as much as he could spare from his ancestry). The benign spirit who stood on one side of the Baronet's cradle at his birth, also attended him to the altar when he plighted his troth to Millicent Lawson Wentworth. After this, for his punishment—for each respective sin, not only our pleasant vices, but our very unpleasant ones, have their respective retribution in this life—after this epoch, the good and evil elements which composed the character of Sir Tufton struggled together for the rest of his life. It was passed between happiness and fear,—enjoyment and compunction. As Wolsey prohibited the word “Kingston,” so Sir Tufton abjured the town of Derby. It was never to be referred to, if it could possibly be avoided. He gave up attending assizes, on the grand jury; he called his son-in-law “Wentworth” only; above all, he caused all the laurel trees to be cut down;—lastly, and, as it proved, this was a cruel precaution, he caused the boy, whose father had done the deed of darkness, to be brought up in ignorance of the awful fate which that either very unfortunate, or

very guilty father, had encountered. The boy was taught to call Sir Tufton "father," and to the best of the little baronet's abilities he executed the trust well. He taught him his own consequence; he instructed him in the duty of despising other people,—doing it genteelly and politely, nevertheless. He pointed out to him "where his place was, and where it was not." He carefully instilled the distinction which one creature, who has never thought, studied, nor acted in the business of life, who has not degraded himself by a profession, nor positively debased himself by a trade, has an entire right, according to some creeds, to assume over an industrious, studying, working creature; he proved to him clearly the immense superiority of idleness over exertion,—of getting your money in the natural way, to deriving it from the vulgarity of toil. And for years this artificial state, these mistaken views, did not manifestly tell upon the happiness of young Lawson Wentworth. They only made him disagreeable, taking from childhood its subservience and simplicity, and giving to it a certain old-manishness, ten times more worthy of flogging, than robbing orchards; but, in due time, the haughty boy grew up into the inflated, petulant youth, his mother's terror, and her dar-

ling; one in whom her affections were absorbed, for he was the offspring of an early love; the son of the convicted murderer had a double claim upon her gentle sympathies. Sometimes, as he flitted around her, or near her, diverting himself with the very fishing-tackle perhaps, or the bows and arrows that her brother Horace had used, a panic seized on the mother's heart; she pictured to herself the possibility that he too might be taken from her as suddenly as Horace had been carried off; a vague oppressive consciousness, long resisted, that all was not right in that case, that somehow unfair means had been used, gave to this superstitious dread a sort of importance and validity, which often oppressed the rich heiress of Coughton Manor. Still, she believed Mr. Lawson to have been innocent, wholly innocent;—her suspicions rested on Stanhope Floyer.

“I have but one wish of my heart ungratified,” said Millicent one day, to Mr. Powell; “of course I never speak of it to Sir Tufton. I wish to erect a monument to the memory of my first husband—of poor, calumniated, murdered Lawson.”

Mr. Powell started. These were not exactly the terms he would have applied to Mr.

Lawson; but he inwardly praised the goodness of Providence, which mercifully suffers, in many cases, a moral blindness, a kindly self-deception, which blunts the edge of the keenest sorrows.

“Better not!” was the reply of the Rector of Coughton. “Besides, your son is taught to suppose that his father died abroad.”

“Oh, but I dread that state of ignorance! Suppose the truth should burst upon him at once. Suppose, when he goes to Eton, or to college, he should be told of what occurred! I am terrified, when I think of it.”

“Sir Tufton loves him as a father,” said Mr. Powell, willing to turn off a subject so delicate and difficult. “’Tis a pity he is not really his father!”

“Ah, Mr. Powell! Sir Tufton is very good; but it is impossible he ever could have a son like my poor Wentworth, so high-spirited, so handsome;—just, just like poor, injured Lawson!”

Mr. Powell smiled.—“A marriage of convenience, not of affection,” he muttered to himself as he left Millicent trying to recover her variable spirits by sitting down to her harpsichord.

The news of Sir Tufton’s marriage arotised

mation. "I'll just step
Meadows is."

Mrs. Brooksbanks had a
tone of condolence; so
you how you do with
was fine, the sentence
which might have suited
compassion, sympathy,
with heavy sorrow for
wicked world, were the
lady's discourse.

"Mrs. Meadows has
ma'am; she's only just
umbrella, to cross over
Academy. Mr. Jones has
school, and misses has
drops over with her."

"Very particular dro
thought Mrs. Brooksbank
blue drawing-room. Mr
long disappeared from t

“—My dear, poor dear Mrs. Meadows!” exclaimed Mrs. Brooksbanks, turning suddenly round, hearing the door open. “Oh, so I have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Jones too! taking care of Mrs. Meadows across the green, I suppose! Well, I’m thankful to say, I can walk across the green by myself.”

“We’ve a dear, anxious little charge,” said Louisa, with a look of importance, “and this naughty man is fretting himself to fiddle-strings about it. The measles are in the school, you’ve heard, I dare say; — Mrs. Brooksbanks is generally well-informed on all subjects. Well, I’m happy to say, they’re coming out delightfully, and there’s no fear but that all will get over it.” Mrs. Meadows looked with a triumphant air at Mrs. Brooksbanks, who, it was well known, patronized another academy, and who was thought to have undermined Mr. Jones.

Mr. Jones looked stupid and anxious, and very quickly took his leave; then Mrs. Brooksbanks’ curiosity broke forth.

“So Sir Tufton Tyrawley is married! you’ve heard of it, of course; every one’s heard it;—it’s in the county paper.”

“I wish him joy. He’s not the person I ever could feel interested in; but I must say

he behaved very unhandsome to me, making one the talk of everybody, which really is not gentlemanly, Mrs. Brooksbanks; and making poor dear, excellent Mr. Jones so very unhappy. I can't forgive him that."

"So dear, excellent Mr. Jones has a right to be unhappy," thought Mrs. Brooksbanks. "This will amuse Brooksbanks."

"But, however, all's well that ends well,—we have had an explanation, and I have set his dear heart at rest;—only he's uncommonly worried with people objecting to the terms, and all that,—I can't think how any one can object to his terms, seeing the uncommon advantages: the boys all treated as one of the family, and the strictest attention paid to their religious and moral education. I can't think how people can be so illiberal as to undermine Mr. Jones, and patronise other schools. If I had fifty boys they should all go to Mr. Jones."

"I dare say,—will you allow me to ask for my clogs? The rain has done now."

"The reports that have been raised about him, Mrs. Brooksbanks, come, we know, from one source, — Mr. Huddersfield of the St. John's Academy. Mr. Huddersfield would be remarkably glad to stand in Mr. Jones's shoes."

“Our dinner hour is nigh,” said Mrs. Brooksbanks, hurrying away. “Good morning! Don’t stand in the door, my dear, there’s such a current of air,” added Mrs. Brooksbanks, in a condoling tone, and hurrying down the front steps.

The dew
Sank e
It felt lik
Of whi

Thy vows
And li
I hear thy
And sh

It was a gloom
late when Mrs.
with post-horses,
convey her from
return ;—for it w
though the cause
no longer the mea
All had been hur
Powell's last visit
had seized her ; sl
at Woodcote, aft
others. In her d

she found herself in the world a desolate and unprotected being, without a home, with some acquired ties, with no natural ones that could sustain her under the peculiarities of her situation.

Honour, fidelity, affection, seemed to her, in the poignancy of her sufferings, chimeras. The husband of her youth had allowed her to remain ignorant of his existence for years, in order to indulge in tranquillity a guilty passion for another. He had returned, and his first aim was to provide for his future career,—perhaps one of guilt,—by impoverishing his wife.

If she had never loved him, Adeline would have submitted to the effects of her husband's selfishness without a sigh. But love *can* be converted into disgust,—contempt. As we flee from false pleasures, so we recoil the more from the glittering and beautiful form of which we discover the hollowness. Wounded affection had gradually, very gradually wrought poor Adeline's cure; but the cure was almost as bad as the disease. The poignancy of those pangs which resentment against a once loved object imparts, none can understand who have not loved fondly, and, of course, foolishly.

The carriage, with its patient steeds, stood

so long at the hall door that the assembled poor, who thronged the park-gate, thought that their benefactress had changed her mind, and was not setting out that day. Noon was at hand, and the poor labourers were thinking of their dinners, and the wives could scarcely keep their little ones quiet, and still the horses, tired out as they already looked, stood by the hall-door,—still that door was shut and opened by the old butler with an anxious face, whilst within the house an ominous silence prevailed. It was as if a death had visited the Grange, for everything denoted a breaking-up of that once happy and luxurious household. The drawing-room furniture was all packed up, and the pictures were covered over: and the aviary within the cloister was mute—the birds had been given away. The gardener was discharged, and the flowers had already shown a spirit of insubordination, and straggled wildly over the borders;—the dog, faithful Boa, Lady Theodora's bequest, lay with a sort of instinct working in his half-enlightened mind at the door of the drawing-room, as if he felt that something was going on wrong, and as if his protection, poor beast! could avail to rescue his mistress from harm.

But presently the watchful creature, seeming

only to slumber, raised his broad forehead as a footstep, not of the household, for those Boa knew distinctively, approached. The dog gave a short bark, but to retrieve his error atoned for so ill a compliment by every token of joy ; — and he was caressed by a well known, and wellbeloved hand.

Adeline had never had spirits, as her servants remarked, even to walk through the house or to cross the lawn since the day when she had decided to leave Woodcote ; but now she had been into every apartment with a composure and minuteness which astonished those who did not reflect how much fortitude may be acquired, even by the gentlest characters, when the conduct is actuated by right principles, and the conscience is at peace. She looked out of many of the windows upon the fair but circumscribed prospect which lay beneath the windows of the Grange, and took a calm farewell, as it were, of all that she had long loved, and lived for, and improved. Her pitying and attached dependents thought her even apathetic ;—but they knew not how much the greater misfortune absorbed the lesser, nor how easy it was for Adeline to part with Woodcote when she had parted with every hope that could render the future happy.

Everything was now ready. The house-keeper had received her final directions,—uttered indeed with an absent air, and in a faltering voice; the packages were all in the carriage; the maid was even on the carriage seat—for Adeline was to pursue her road inside alone. At this point, the last act of a tragedy, of bustle and heartache, the composure of Adeline suddenly forsook her. She withdrew from the two servants who stood near her, and rushed into the drawing-room.

She was not alone there. A gentleman, with his back towards her, was looking at a picture which had been left exposed. He turned round, and his appearance seemed to paralyse the affrighted Adeline. Her footsteps were bound as if in trance, or catalepsy;—she could not retreat. Face to face they stood, the injured, and the injurer. In the stillness of that secluded apartment *they* met, after an interval of years. How had that interval been occupied?

Adeline was the first to recover herself,—the first to remember, or at least to comment upon the position in which they relatively stood. It was terror,—terror of what the delicacy of woman most dreads, an union with infamy, that stimulated her fainting resolution.

“You have broken your contract! the condition on which—”

“ Yes, I know I am wholly in your power. But I am in the power of one who is generous and forgiving. Yes, Adeline ! unless you are greatly altered, you *are* generous—you *will* forgive.” He stopped short, and something of the fascinating manner of the former Stanhope Floyer was displayed in those few brief sentences.

Oh how former scenes of misery, and of fond delusions were recalled by that voice ! How it brought back the matrimonial discord, the stings of jealousy, the reproach wrung from the gentlest of spirits by wanton disregard and cruelty ! How well she remembered, how with a few fond accents he who had never really loved her, could once resume all his ascendancy over her spirit—willing to be enslaved.

“ I hope I do forgive : I try. Oh, I try to forgive ! ” exclaimed Adeline, clasping her hands, with anguish painted on her face. “ Why do you come here ? I have given you all, — all you asked, or ever wished from me.”

“ Perhaps I repent,” said Stanhope Floyer, with a half-sullen, half-subservient air.

“ I pray that you may ! — I pray that you may ! — There ! ” She turned her head towards him for a moment, and extended her

hand. It met the cold emaciated hand of Stanhope Floyer for an instant, and was then hastily withdrawn.

“I come,” resumed Mr. Floyer, after a pause, the hoarse sounds of his voice echoing through the empty room, — “I come to claim my wife.”

“To claim!” The words were repeated with a wild scream — “to claim! — what would you have? — my fortune? Take all! — leave me but a pittance. It is all you ever sought. Besides, — besides,” continued Adeline in a hurried manner, and feeling as if her senses were scared away, “you have signed, — you have signed the settlement.”

“Yes, but the settlement goes for nothing. I do not choose to be an outcast, branded as the man whom his wife flies from. It is not *only* money, Adeline, I want comfort — peace — a home!”

“Can you look to *me* for that? Am I, the deserted, the long-forgotten, to support and solace one who has been my bane, — the destroyer of every happy moment? But I am wrong. Oh God, forgive me! Do you most wretched man, — you who have cast away life’s every blessing, forgive me, me too, that cruel, that untimely reproach!”

She turned round towards him as she spoke. The emaciated and drooping form met her eye ; but her prejudging mind saw only, in the havoc of that once noble frame, the lesson of retribution which the dissolute, in their decline, read to mankind. The pitying and gentle Adeline pitied, indeed, but recoiled from the enervated and fragile libertine.

Mr. Floyer was silent for some moments : then he suddenly took up his hat from the floor where it had fallen. "Farewell !" he said in a voice broken by emotion : " I shall trouble you no more ! I shall not trouble you again," he repeated, as he closed the door after him : and Adeline was left in that vast room in silence, broken only by her own gasping.

She stood for some moments, then turned timidly to the door. He was, indeed, gone, — but had he left *her* in peace ? Would she not at that moment have recalled him ? Did not that unsparing monitor, which chastises even the expression "just wrath," tell her that she had acted harshly ? — that she had broken down the "bruised reed," and dimmed the first dawnings of penitence ? She had remembered the sin, and not the miserable condition of the sinner ?

"But I could not live with him again !" she

groaned, answering these self-prompted questions, and throwing herself on a sofa, where in agony she lay, burying her face in her hands, nor daring to look upon the spot where he, the long sought, long mourned, had stood.

She was found sobbing hysterically by one of her servants;—and soon the carriage of Mrs. Stanhope Floyer was seen, with the blinds down, avoiding the observations of the villagers by driving a different way from the Grange. The little assemblage dispersed. It was a mournful day at Woodcote and Northington. The servants at the Grange had now nothing to do but to shut up the shutters, and to wonder if they ever would be opened again. Boa could sleep in his kennel all day undisturbed: few footsteps came nigh to rouse the fine creature from his dreaming existence. Like all the rest of the world, he soon grew old and stupid,—the companion of elderly housemaids, and the be-tyrannized pet of a lame, cross, and unemployed housekeeper: so poor Boa shared in the misfortunes of the family.

Adeline pursued her way to London. Those were not the days of flying; and the lonely traveller was obliged to sleep one night at an inn; and that famous old inn called Chapel House, in which one doubts whether to curtsy

to, or pay the host and hostess, was the choice of a confidential servant who managed the details of the journey.

The *lady* was ushered into a long, dreary apartment, where she was to spend the evening alone: the servants went together to enjoy themselves in the socialities of the bar. Happy times those, before we were whisked along by rail-roads: our grandchildren will think it an event to spend a night at an English inn: they will lose a great deal of enjoyment; and I doubt whether the benefits of travelling, which result greatly from an incessant change of habitation, will be so certain. I have seen nervous people roused from apathy by a pair of fire-screens; and a fit of ill-humour assuaged by looking round at the suite of pictures with which our old-fashioned inns were sure to be embellished. The civility of a waiter has diverted many a domestic broil; and even the introduction of a smoky newspaper, imbued with reminiscences of tobacco, has been gratefully received by one who would have thrust it into the fire at home.

Then, the very hot tea, the ready fire, the well-warmed bed, — the downy feather-beds, not yet giving place to the hard-hearted system of mattresses,—how could one but be comfort-

bestowed on one who
a blazing fire, allowing
to be brought in and
word, without even a look
of the waiter; without
candles were lighted, and
a damp night, a candle
to the head-waiter.
There she sat, her eyes
when, at last, the shut
curtains drawn, and the
and the candles set
snuffers in their right
done that could be done
finally closed, she covered
hands, and wept, — we
broken,—as if she could
lonely sorrows; and the
of an October day was

At length bed-time
ceded by her maid, who
chamber. I do not know

of Cl

per on the walls on either side, — replaced, I dare say, now, by something of a pastoral nature; trellis-work, perhaps, with roses peeping through, or birds with long legs catching flies, or, perhaps, — but, no matter, — then, at any rate, the paper was a dim crimson flock, looking warm and dirty, and showing the former importance of a house which, I dare say, if we were to look into the county histories, we should discover to have been a gentleman's seat. Half-way up this broad staircase was a landing-place, lighted by a large window, in which that creeping cactus, which was then a favourite in inns and cottages, grew, trained across;—a huge campanula, in pots, stood on either side.

Now, the night was stormy, and the winds, in fits, chose to close the doors even of the isolated inn rather more expeditiously than was polite and agreeable. The hostess scolded in vain; the chambermaids were not to be blamed for it; for once, that illustrious stranger, "Nobody," was quoted to the purpose.

Just as Adeline and her maid gained the landing-place the words "Confound it, my candle is blown out!" reached their ears; a broad-shouldered young man, rather in a hurry, added, on seeing the lady and her attendant,

“Excuse me, ladies, but may I light my candle at yours?—I’ve a sick friend, or I wouldn’t make so free.”

Mrs. Floyer’s maid, conciliated by the address, “ladies,” graciously complied; and the strange gentleman took the opportunity whilst the candle was lighted of surveying the one of the two whom even his discernment selected for the lady. He made his bow, and the ladies proceeded towards their room. The young man ran down stairs with noiseless step, for he had no shoes on; but no sooner had Adeline and her servant gone a little way down the gallery, which, I have no doubt, still remains at Chapel House, than he overtook them.

“I beg your pardon, ladies.” They both stopped short, and the lady’s-maid dropped a curtsy — “I beg ten thousand pardons, would you be so good as to close your door as gently as you can?—my friend is very poorly to-night—sleeps in No. 2—that is, I dare say, he won’t sleep, for he’s very ill—exceedingly ill, indeed.”

“Can *I* be of any use, sir?” said the maid, curtsying, whilst her mistress turned round abruptly, inspired with sudden interest.

“None at all;—I hope we shan’t disturb you in the night, ladies,” and, with ten thou-

sand apologies, he disappeared, creeping down the passage as if on a bad mission, instead of an errand of mercy.

The scene now changed to a bed-room with a cave of a bed, lined with the darkest green, with a deep antiquated fire-place, a chest of drawers a mile high, and a looking-glass, dim enough to put one out of countenance. There was something appallingly dismal in the apartment, which was honoured with the accustomed dark-green hangings, on account of its being the best bed-room, No. 1.

I do not think I could have slept alone in it for the world, but Adeline was more courageous. It was quite a room to commit suicide in, or to contrive a neat little murder in the corner of that deep designing-looking bed; yet the bright fire threw a gleam upon the white counterpane like a visitation of hope to the deserted.

Mrs. Stanhope Floyer rose, however, above the weak reflections I have hinted at—indeed, her mind was absorbed in other matters. Her maid was rejoiced to hear her speak at last—it was like the first sounds of Eve's voice to Adam, or, to descend to rather a later period, like Friday's to Robinson Crusoe.

Yet the words were very few, very quietly spoken, and to this import: "Will you go

down stairs, and ask *who* the invalid is of whom that gentleman spoke?"

"With the greatest of pleasures." When did a servant not go down stairs to their fellows with the greatest of pleasures? Mistress Anne stayed a good half hour; and when she came up again, she entered gasping and panting, as *if* she had hurried herself, which was certainly not the case.

She could gain no information as to the name,—all the *gentleman's* packing-cases, &c., were in his room; the chambermaid had not noticed the name. As for the young man with him, *his* box, an old hair trunk with one handle, was below; they had turned it over and over, but the direction had been "tore off." Boots had orders to get a handle put on, which was the reason it had been left below.

But the gentleman at No. 2 was very ill—that all the house knew—and was ordered to lie very still, having broken a blood-vessel that very afternoon, and his friend was going to sit up with him.

"Very well." No further questions were asked; Anne was dismissed, and her mistress went to bed.

She did not even attempt to sleep. The

rushlight was her friend, and aided her to pass the long, long hours before midnight, for it was enclosed within its accustomed tin cage; and the chequer-work of that enclosure, with its miniature tank within, was reflected on the ceiling, and served the sleepless eye as an object to rest upon. The fire died away; and there was a perfect stillness, save when the gusty wind blew round the house, and shook the window-shutters as if about to make a forcible entrance even into the chamber of the invalid, whose shutters, as Adeline could hear, rattled also.

During the first part of the night there was no other noise in the sick man's room except, now and then, a step across it and a word or two, as if some one was persuading him to take his medicine. But towards morning, and especially after the wind fell, Adeline heard frequent coughing. There was only a partition wall—No. 1 and No. 2 had formerly been one room—and she could even hear the bed creak as if the poor wearied invalid turned from side to side, and then a cough—not violent, but for hours incessant—it was melancholy to listen to it, for all that the friend appeared to be administering seemed to fail to relieve it. Oh, that cough! how in after-

much it must fatigue
—how disheartening to
to arise, and offer to be
alone in the world al
brother ill, or a friend,
something to do in nur
that the dying should ca
one should. Again—the
ever-returning cough!
persed; the bright day
had fallen; the air was
which had built under th
dashed their silvery be
in their busy happiness;
was full of mirth and ch
that ever-sounding coug
these notes of cheerfulness
of death amid the most b

Adeline met the stran
seen the previous night
breakfast. She stopped
ing through the corridor
in his hand, to ask af

he stared at the fair inquirer evidently with a considerable degree of curiosity ; then he said very hastily, " He is not worse, but very faint, that 's all," and he rushed past her.

Adeline could not be angry ; for the shirt without a cravat, the rough unwashed face, the slovenly costume, and pale complexion of the young man, denoted that he had been up all night, and she was too humble, too much humbled to resent anything now. She moved on and went to her solitary breakfast, thinking how very strange had been her chimeras of the previous night ; for it was evident that he who now solely occupied her thoughts could not be the invalid, as in the gloom of her chamber she had fancied — why, she knew not ; for the morning previous she had seen him able to walk, and although altered, not displaying any of those fatal symptoms of which she felt almost a judge since she had heard that hollow, never-to-be-forgotten cough.

Breakfast was soon over ; her short account was soon paid ; a carriage with a pair of lean post-horses was brought round ; but Adeline still felt a reluctance to depart, for which she could not account.

She had no reasons, however, to induce her to stay, but many to make her wish to

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‘ Well! She is a cold-hearted creature,—never mind,—you’ll want no nurse whilst I can get my duty done; and Gadsden has undertaken it.’

“Gadsden!”

“ Even he. Mrs. Gumley likes his reading, and he won’t cut the Rector out in preaching. Miss Portman goes round the schools with him,—all will do very well,—now, don’t talk to me, my good fellow; don’t speak to me,—let *me* talk,—you don’t know how entertaining I can be. This unlucky attack all came of your talking so much, and getting into such a way as you did after your interview with Mrs. Floyer, and her casting you off so cruelly, —never mind, we’ll go to the blessed south, and a few sea-breezes, and a little sailing, and a little sea-sickness,—an invention, I believe, of those wretches, the doctors, to make people miserable,—will do you good,—now don’t answer me; hush, not a word.”

“ May not I ask for a newspaper? ”

“ Twenty in a trice!—By the way, the post is not in yet:—suppose, to pass the time, we read a little of a book, which you and I, Stanhope, in our thoughtless youth, have, I fear, neglected a little too much.” And Martin laid his hand on a Bible as he spoke.

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is usual to speak of London as wanting in comfort; but there is a class of houses, a class of inhabitants which present the outward semblance of comfort; the small tenements each with a neat garden, at Pentonville, or Islington, from which on Sundays turn out some spruce city clerk and his wife on their way to church. On week-days,—to the minute,—the lord and master of the small abode passes his neighbours on his way to his office, his shoes blacked to perfection, and an umbrella, always a silk one, graces his right hand. True,—his existence is routine, but it has its enjoyments, even its excitements; and for this class of persons, London, scandalized as it is, offers a sufficiency of cheap enjoyments. There are the parks on Sunday,—the poor man's parks. Setting aside the minor theatres, hot-beds of vice, there are tea-gardens, the remnant of French manners, patronized by the great in Addison's time. There is the noble river, and refreshing excursions can now to be obtained at small expense. There are the Museum and Hampton Court, all, all to be enjoyed rationally, even religiously, if the respectable member of the middle classes *could* be happy upon the fine element of water, instead of the corruption of malt liquor; if

his habits were simple as his fortunes are small. Let him not grumble; 'tis the temperance of continental nations that promotes and prolongs, because it cheapens their enjoyments, rendering them wholesome pleasures, and not, as our middle and lower classes generally consider them, occasions for mystifying their reason and inflaming their blood.

It was not loneliness, it was not comparatively narrow means, it was not disappointed affection which rendered the sojourn which Adeline was obliged to make in London a season of unhappiness—it was self-reproach. Compassion had succeeded resentment, and the re-action was the more painful because she felt, that had her own affections remained constant she could not have repulsed the penitent from her. She pined in thought,—she did more,—she endeavoured to discover where her husband resided that she might write to him, that she might atone for her unkindness; she forgot all that he had done to merit her rebuke, or if she remembered it, it was to weep over his criminality, as angels might weep over a tale of earthly guilt.

CHAPTER XII.

The stars above us govern our conditions.

SHAKESPEARE.

“MY dear, don't stand on one foot, and don't say Calais *lays* to the north of France: don't call Autun; *Ortun*; fetch your music, my love; count a little louder. Good heavens! don't bawl,—ah me! ‘Hope told a flattering tale!’—was ever Hope so libelled!”

Thus spoke a careful step-mother, once Mrs. Meadows, now Mrs. Jones. The subject of her instructions was a great girl of thirteen, who chose to look sixteen, a light-haired, lazy, full-eyed young lady, with the smallest possible proportion of intellect, and the largest possible of obstinacy. Jemima Jones was only one of Mrs. Meadows's cares; there were three boys, always quarrelling and running after each other with red hot pokers or firing off small cannon, or getting on the house-tops. And then there were fifteen pupils, who, as Mrs Jones often said, did not

make half the disturbance in the house that these three boys did ; she took the part of the pupils, and Mr. Jones took his three boys' part. Jemima Jones took her own, and was backed out by an old nurse, who had lived some twenty years in the family. Mr. Jones was a patriotic character, and had named his three boys, Hampden, Alfred, and Cromwell.

Mrs. Meadows had been literally persecuted into marriage by Mr. Jones, who had taken the pathetic line, and worked upon her feelings. The punctuality of his habits, and the regularity of his visits had had a good influence also upon his success. Vanity, idleness, the love of intrigue, and a determination to disappoint the housekeeper cousin, whom Mr. Jones had cleverly invited to come and live with him before his second marriage, had finished the business.

Mrs. Jones, with a sigh, began to unpick a pocket-handkerchief hem, which her step-daughter had cobbled up. Jemima Jones hated work.

"*I* made a shirt before I was ten years old," said Mrs. Jones mournfully. "Now," she added aloud, "play 'The Fall of Paris,' and then you may go ; but, remember, you're not to be made a leap-frog to-day, with your

clean frock; and no prisoner's base, if you please! I forgot; there's Mr. Joy's class for the use of the globes to-day; mind you *do* ask him to give you the meaning of the word longitude, and, if you can understand it, —latitude."

"She'll spoil my looks, that girl," said Mrs. Jones, going up to a glass, as her' step-daughter departed. "And to think of all her mother's relations praising her up as they do. There's Alfred has cut Hampden over the eye—fie, fie! naughty boy!" she called out, knocking vehemently at the window.

"Papa," she exclaimed a few minutes afterwards, "you positively must not indulge Cromwell so much. He's a fine, noble, charming creature too, — but he teaches Jemima naughty words, and Alfred makes use of expressions of which *I* never knew the meaning before."

Mr. Jones was not quite so civil to his wife as he used to be.

"There's cake and wine wanted, Mrs. Jones: Mr. and Mrs. Gadsden mean to return your call to-day. Tell Betty to take those clothes off the hedges, Sue."

"And desire Mr. Hammond not to let the boys be seen about," added Mrs. Jones. "Mrs.

Gadsden's a particularly genteel woman, I hear, which is what I've always been accustomed to, until I came here—"

"Which was quite your own doing, my dear," retorted Mr. Jones.

"Ah! I have made great sacrifices! But one's feelings lead one away. And then I was so adored by my first husband's family that I was quite spoilt, I believe. Heavens and earth! What *are* those boys knocking over my head for? They have broken into the spare room."

"It is Cromwell, I dare say; he has taken a fancy to take off all the locks from the doors and put them on again," said Mr. Jones; "and it's such a very harmless amusement, and will teach him to use his hands: besides, he *will* do it."

"I believe you," replied Mrs. Jones, expressively. She sighed, as she walked to the window, and remembered the widower's account of his three promising sons. Cromwell was high spirited, but so generous and tractable. Alfred was meek as a lamb,—and Hampden, sweet little Hampden had but one fault—he was only too good to live."

"They are coming, I declare!—Mr. and Mrs. Gadsden and another lady! How unlucky it's

a wash ! Mr. Jones, isn't it your hour for accounts ? I can receive them, you know. Just make your bow to Mr. Gadsden—and remember, don't say a word about lowering the terms. People do talk so in Northington ; and the Portmans and Gumleys are high."

Mr. and Mrs. Gadsden and a younger Miss Portman came in almost before the last word of the speech was uttered. Mr. Gadsden was, at last, a Benedict, and somewhat by the same process that the Benedict of old had been enticed into marriage, he had been talked into it : and the same system went on ; he was still to be talked into things to his dying day.

The poor little Curate looked as trim as ever, but somewhat subdued and overhauled by a great talker of a wife, and a great talker of a sister-in-law, both of whom took some pains to convince him that he had no judgment, and knew nothing at all of any subject whatsoever. Mrs. Gadsden, like all ladies past "*la première jeunesse*," spoke a great deal of "Mamma," in that pretty innocent way as if she still rested for advice and protection on the maternal character. Mamma would be so anxious about her ; "Mamma would say this," "Mamma would think that." And then she had that tax upon society, a "Dear papa," who

was quoted incessantly, as if he had been a Pitt or a Burke, or a Peel. And "Dear papa" was just as tender of, and anxious about, this interesting lambkin of forty as "Mamma."

Poor Mr. Gadsden had lived hitherto for himself alone, and it was quite a new light to him that there was any one else worth living for; but, whenever he attempted to have his own way, there was a formidable sister Gumley to appeal to—a lady some six feet high, with a voice as loud as a bell, and of that indomitable will which always gets its own way; and there was a younger sister, Miss Harriet, who said sententious and severe things which puzzled Mr. Gadsden, and confused the little reason which sister Gumley's decisions, and the reference to "Mamma," and constant quotation of "Dear papa," had left to the poor Curate.

If there is a science I admire, it is that of Henpeckism. It shows such consummate self-will, such moral courage, such system, such practice. Mr. Gadsden gradually softened and shrank away into nothing under its influence. True, his apprenticeship was misery. He was even forbidden to pass sentence upon the merits of melted butter, or to decide whether the tea was weak or strong.

His own peculiar science, the cooking a beef-steak with onions, was taken out of his hands; yet the victim, such is the perfection of the mystical philosophy of the Henpeck school, kissed the rod that smote him.

Of course, the first half hour was spent in a dissertation upon the weather; which might have closed sooner, but Mr. Gadsden unguardedly pronounced the wind cold, and his wife could not possibly do him the injustice of letting him remain in any error without recantation. So, after many comments, in which Miss Harriet backed her sister out, and a long story about an old uncle of Mrs. Gadsden's, who wrote down an account of the weather every day in the year, and after a few strong quotations from dear papa, Mr. Gadsden was brought to his senses, and was obliged to acknowledge that the wind was hot, not cold.

"You've really a tolerable look-out here, Mrs. Jones; very nice indeed, for Northington: now my sister Gumley's house—"

"Lies so low," interposed Mr. Gadsden,—a little bit of malice, perhaps, for his previous concession.

"Low!" ejaculated Mrs. Gadsden and Miss Portman at once. "My sister Gumley's lies

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“Poor
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bably it had hung ever since he came to Northington—the sacred privacy of his bands disturbed; and all at the bidding of two very plain, and mightily disagreeable women!”

“Any news of Mrs. Stanhope?” asked Mrs. Gadsden in a tone as if she thought it a condescension. “I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance, though she knows me by name, I dare say. Her husband was staying with my brother Gumley’s curate a considerable time.”

“The family don’t acknowledge Mr. Stanhope Floyer,” returned Mrs. Jones, drawing up. “Poor dear Stanhope! If any one had influence with him *I* had; he was so very fond of me; but as he behaved rude to Mr. Jones, passing through Northington, as we know he did, and never calling, of course I can’t know him.

“You have reason to be obliged to Mr. Floyer,” said Mrs. Gadsden, touching her husband’s arm with her elbow. “If it hadn’t been for Mr. Martin’s going away, you never would have had the privilege of visiting at Ireton rectory, where my sister and brother Gumley received you as if he had been their own brother. There’s a fate in these things—I remember being *so* unwilling to go into the drawing-room one certain day, when it was so or-

dained that I was to make him happy had been in such a nervous state, poor soul!"

"How pretty and interesting!" said Louisa: and as the cake and wine were in she took the opportunity of expressing her cordial good wishes with peculiar assiduity to Mr. Gadsden.

"I think we were near being reconciled," she added archly, resolved to see if she could take Mrs. Gadsden down.

"Ah! John has told me of that," she confessed everything to each other about our marriage, and how very, very much he was being taken in,—his happiness ruined!"

"I was only glad"—here Mr. Gadsden interposed—"not to be the cause of reproach to other peoples'—"

"Is it true," inquired Miss Portman, "that the parties are reconciled? My sister Louisa was bearing—"

"I shouldn't suppose," replied Mrs. Gadsden cavalierly, "that she has much opportunity of hearing what passes in the first circle of London. I never enter into family affairs, and, indeed, my dear late husband's son, Loftus Meadows, is too much concerned

the Floyer property to commit himself on the subject, even to me. Ever since poor dear Mr. Meadows's death, — Mr. Jones, would you call Alfred down from the pear-tree? — the affection and attachment shown to me by his family are such as no one would believe: but then they — Mr. Jones, my dear, do close the window in the next room — are gentlemen and ladies.”

Mrs. Jones uttered these words in a whisper, with a portentous face; and as the party, after some further conference, moved away, they all three agreed that she was evidently not happy; whilst, on the other hand, Mrs. Jones, in describing the visit of the Gadsden party to her husband, commented on the hardship of Mr. Gadsden's destiny in terms pathetic. The truth is, it is not every day that second marriages are productive of comfort: like servants changing their places, “my last situation” is remembered with all its harsh points softened, whilst, in the present portion of our pilgrimage, the roughness of the un-boiled “peas” is felt.

CHAPTER XIII.

Too late I stayed ; forgive the crime ;
Unheeded flew the hours ;
How noiseless falls the foot of Time
That only treads on flowers !

What eye with clear account remarks
The ebbing of the glass,
When all the sands are diamond sparks
That dazzle as they pass !

WILLIAM SPENCER.

assembly. There was royalty in the chair, — and royalty in the bloom of youth, and vigour of intellect, — rank on either side, — genius, wit, fancy, to the right and to the left: what was more important, there was an ample board spread; and above, like the stars in the heavens, a galaxy, as the royal chairman called it, of beauty and fashion, looking on the nether scene with ethereal complacency.

It was not easy either to hear or see from this altitude; yet one fair girl seemed bent on doing both. A ringlet of her hair, which hung from the back of her head, touched the balustrade over which she leaned. Her loveliness, and the careless grace with which she rested her head upon her hand when conversing with an old lady opposite to her, attracted many an admiring observation from those who should have been occupied with severer themes.

“I wish *he* would speak,” she said several times impetuously. “There! — there! — don’t you see his head? — he is reading a letter: look, — at the extremity of the raised table. One cannot mistake *that* head.”

The old lady put on her spectacles: she could not find it out.

“Look again: oh! Aunt, that high, thoughtful forehead, with the dark eyebrows, — he is

the finest speaker of the day," added — "and the finest character, too. I am in love with him: — and there's that mystery about him!"

"But has he rank, — estates?" asked the old lady, pricking up her ears at the mystery, and at last, after hunting heads and shoulders of every possible person, finding out *the* one.

"He's a commoner, 'tis true, but it adds dignity to his dear name, — how it! — Floyer, Floyer, — anciently, Eustace Floyer. If you were to see him

"*Fin, se!* Gertrude," interrupted her, looking now even anxiously upon the where Eustace Floyer sat.

There was an infinitude of troubles gone through before the young lady could gratified by hearing the young orator. It was a great political dinner, and there to be a heavy bombardment of toasts: "The King" — "The Queen" — "The Prince of Wales" — "The Royal Family;" and, in temporary evidence is to be accredited, a speeches of that day, and of many other to be taken in evidence, there never was a family so replete with virtues. So, indeed the whole assembly; it was like a pack of

with none but the court cards in it. The honourable gentleman who rose to harangue could not proceed with the subject of his discourse until he had spoken of the honourable gentleman who had sat down, in terms which would have immortalized any man, if half as much had been said—before diuner. Every orator in the place was taken by surprise,—so common an occurrence at public dinners, that it seems strange some means are not taken to prevent so awkward an occurrence.

There was a long endurance of the heavy artillery of judges and bishops needful, before the really gifted speakers (those to whom the reporters for the press earnestly listened, because they were not sure what *they* would say) came forward on this occasion. At length the corner where Eustace Floyer sat, seemed to be disturbed; gentlemen moved back a little: there was a silence in the hall. The automaton who attitudinized behind his Royal Highness's chair had little need of his wand of office to enforce attention: a rich, mature voice, distinct in every syllable, without a harsh note, without an effort in the fulness of its sounds, was heard to utter a few sentences. They were calm and clear: but presently, the theme which all were met to commemo-

morate — one of those absorbing themes which have ever employed the wisest heads, and warmed the noblest breasts, fully possessed the mind of the young speaker. Henceforth he had no need of art; his whole soul was thrown into what he uttered: but it was the method and arrangement of his mind that gave force and completeness to what he said. All was natural, but lucid.

He ceased, and the head of the young listener in the gallery, which had been fixed as that of a statue, was slowly thrown back. "Will he speak again?" she asked, turning suddenly round to a gentleman who sat near her.

"Oh, no! There is Lord —, and the Baron de —, and Sir A — A — to speak yet. There will be no opportunity for Mr. Floyer. Perhaps you would like to go?"

"No: I do not wish to go away yet. How melancholy his voice is!"

"Not more so than his countenance."

"What! is he melancholy? can he be unhappy?" cried the girl eagerly. "Why has he not married?" she added, blushing deeply, and looking down as she spoke.

"No one knows; many men do not marry. But you have altered your mind, you are going away."

"He is gone, — I saw him vanish at that

door. I wish to go away, and directly, if you please. Perhaps we may meet him on the stairs. It is so dreadfully warm, I cannot possibly stay any longer: my aunt has been wishing to leave the gallery this hour, and Ellen — Lady Ellen, are you asleep?"

A head, which was buried between two shoulders, was raised with a jerk at these words; and the betrothed of Sir Horace Wentworth, opened a grey eye, now embedded in fat, looked up, and showed signs of existence.

"Going! — are you going? Is all over? is it finished? What are they clapping so loud for? What *are* they making such a noise about? They won't let one have a moment's peace—"

"*You* have no reason to complain," returned Gertrude contemptuously. "Oh! he is returned!" she exclaimed in a moment afterwards. "He is not gone, Aunt;—it is not so warm now; will you stay a little longer? Ellen, you can sleep so nicely against that pillar—take my shawl, take my mantle, take anything to lean against. Charles, do not, *do* not speak to me—I want to listen—I want to look."

The party whom Gertrude addressed were all under subservience to her; and though they had been willing to move at her pleasure, they were now willing to stay at her bidding.

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course, much less to direct the high spirit of Lady Gertrude.

Happily, the young lady had been found troublesome, and was early placed with a clergyman's wife in the country; a punishment, as Lady Ellen considered it, but, as it proved, a benefit to the heiress. For whilst a natural perversity of temper had not been wholly subdued, her generous feelings had been cherished. She had been taught to value what was really valuable,—she had been instructed not to look on this life as *all* within the compass of our reason to provide for; and, although since she had come out into the world, flattery, — her naturally strong passions, and, what is very injurious, a continual association with those beneath her in intellect, had effaced much that was soft and promising, and of good report in Lady Gertrude, — still there was an expansion of mind, a warmth of heart that promised better things.

“I can't think what makes him look so unhappy,” Lady Gertrude broke forth again, after a long contemplative silence. “There! he smiles! What a sweet smile!”

“I don't observe that he looks unhappy,” replied the young man to whom most of Gertrude's observations were addressed; for Mrs.

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the mind of the lover with many visions of future happiness, remembrances of past pleasure — every year, particularly every Christmas, the pleasing and grateful recollections are strengthened; a conviction of his own superior good sense in marrying so well is confirmed. A poor beauty may be very much prized at first, but the being who dignifies the social condition is the favourite of man's heart.

“Charles,”—and the word was sometimes sounded pretty sharply, adored the chains that bound him, and depended upon their being one day formally riveted. He had not yet arrived at the point of being jealous — he was good, faithful, sincere; not of elevated talents, but of very gentlemanly attributes.

“Well, I suppose we must go now,” sighed Gertrude, as, after feasting her eyes on the thoughtful countenance of one who evidently was completely abstracted from the scene before him, she rose, and with a commanding air said, “I am ready to go now.”

“I hate the trouble of standing through this ‘God save the King,’” she whispered to Charles. “Thank Heaven! it is over.”

“You are tired, then?” said Charles, obsequiously, as he wrapped the precious mortal in her mantle, and looked carefully round to see that there was no window open.

“I am a little weary now. Tell me which way do the dinner company go out? Must we all go one way?”

“Yes; and, if you will,” said Charles, he led Lady Gertrude down stairs, “standing amongst chambermaids and waiters, you may see — but you cannot do that.”

“See what?”

“His Royal Highness—”

“Oh, is that all? I thank you—but you must wait, I perceive. Aunt Heneage, there is no chance of our carriage, just yet. Elle vous may yawn unobserved behind me. Charles give poor aunt Heneage your arm — never mind me, I can take care of myself.”

Lady Gertrude took up her station as she spoke at the end of a corridor, through which the favourite actors of the last-enacted scene were obliged perforce to pass.

There was that stern and stately personage then of no higher weight in the nation than as the promoter generally of all that was liberal, and the enforcer of all that was right — the one character displayed as the favourite of a party then denounced and limited, yet boasting the strongest minds and the most generous of spirits among its ranks, — the other as the strict disciplinarian of the regiment of

which he was colonel; a commander of unsparing justice, yet — and for this the world gave him little credit — of the kindest feelings.

Permit me, oh Memory of him who, like Banquo, was doomed to be the father of kings, a tribute of gratitude. In those days—when England poured forth her troops to the Continent,—when the army, in its heroic qualities, was at its zenith,—as a body, in morals, in the lowest state of degradation,—when a mess-room was a scene of drunkenness, and the tyro in depravity was fastened to his seat if he presumed to leave whilst reason held her throne,—there entered into the regiment which Edward Duke of Kent commanded, a youth, scarcely sixteen, one of a numerous and not wealthy family.

His story is soon told: he ran through the usual degrees of depravity; first, error—then vice,—eventually, confirmed habits of dissipation. The regiment was ordered abroad—it was to set sail from Falmouth—the officers received their orders,—but he, who had already given many a pang to the hearts of his parents, was absent without leave. He was superseded—his name was gazetted, the prospects of the youth were for ever blighted by his desertion.

The mother, stunned by the blow, recovered

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heart—again saved the headstrong boy. “For the sake of your parents, and because,” he said, smiling, looking at the tall and comely form of the officer, still in his boyhood,—“I wish I had a regiment of such men as you,—I give you leave to exchange into any other regiment of the line; and, remember, let me hear of you no more—unless I hear something better of you.”

Erect—with that impress of mind on his hard-featured face, which showed for what a high career nature had intended the Duke, he moved along, followed by nobles, bishops, soldiers, sailors, authors, actors, singers, and a miscellaneous company of members of parliament, and small wits. Amid a group of the former, the keen eye of Gertrude caught a glimpse of one who came silently along the corridor. He was a little behind the rest; and as he approached near, the traces of late hours and of ill health were apparent. It could not but be evident to all who looked at him that Eustace Floyer had suffered much and recent anxiety.

“There—there he is!” whispered Gertrude, grasping her aunt’s arm, when, to her surprise, Mr. Floyer stopped short.

“Mrs. Heneage!—Lady Ellen!” he exclaimed very abruptly.

"You have the advantage of me, sir—I've not the honour of recollecting you," said old Mrs. Heneage, curtsying, to her niece's great confusion and vexation.

"Dear me! aunt," said Lady Ellen, coming forward; "don't you remember Lady Theodora Floyer and Mr. Floyer?—she wore a russet silk gown and a blue mob, aunt, at Coughton House."

"Bless me! yes; it was a melancholy event that—a very melancholy event," said Mrs. Heneage, who had lost her memory; "a shocking thing, and I wish that wicked Mr. Lawson had been punished—I do wish he had been punished."

"He was punished," whispered Lady Gertrude, touching her aunt's arm.

"Was he, my dear? I am vastly glad of it; but I never heard of it—I never hear of anything now—people never take the trouble of telling old people anything; all except Ellen—Ellen's very good. Ellen, my dear, how came you never to tell us that Mr. Lawson was punished?"

Lady Ellen had just sense enough to bid her aunt wait till they got home. Lady Ellen's faculties had improved on the decay of her aunt's; like fire-irons, they had been kept in

order by use and friction. Providentially, Lady Ellen's intellect had risen into something like common sense.

"And that Mr. Stanhope Floyer—*he* never came back, I dare say,—tempting Providence as he did," resumed the old lady, her dim eyes suddenly lighted up with unwonted animation. "And how 's his pretty wife?—she always held out that he would come back; now, was she right, or was I right?—where is she?"

Lady Gertrude's eye was full upon Mr. Floyer as he falteringly answered only the latter part of the sentence, and said that Mrs. Stanhope Floyer had left Woodcote. But as he walked with the party to their carriage, he referred with more composure to past times—he seemed to like to dwell on a few little incidents which had happened whilst they were together at Coughton; his cheeks were almost flushed as he wished them good night.

"Lord a mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Heneage. "He asked me where I lived, and I forgot to give him my direction; draw the check-string, Ellen—send Thomas back to him."

Lady Gertrude pulled the check-string violently enough to break the coachman's arm, and then turned Charles out to convey the message to Mr. Floyer. In a few minutes the

footman came to the door, and said Mr. Floyer had run down the street after Mr. Floyer.

The carriage drove after them, and stopped before a lamp-post. Mr. Floyer was leaning against the iron railings — Charles had reached him. Charles, who was a matter-of-fact man, began to think that the admiring all observers was a little insane, for he was gazing up intently at a half-open window. The sounds of a plaintive voice were issuing from the drawing-room. It was clear, and well-modulated voice; but it was nothing of that high science, none of those quaverings and cadences that could justify a man, as Charles thought, in standing in the chill evening air to listen to it. He turned therefore, apprehensively, back a little, and observed in silence, and with a perceptible interest, it acknowledged, sharpened by the remembrance of Lady Gertrude's admiration, that Mr. Floyer's eyes were upturned to an open window. The street, which lay at right angles with the tavern—for they had just turned a corner—lay in that now busy, but unfashionable region of Soho, in which at that time Burke resided, and which was inhabited by a class of persons if not of the highest rank, yet such as now dwell in the streets

leading off from the squares of the west end. Soho Square,—that despised and gloomy quarter, at present abandoned to music warehouses and a bazaar, was, in the time of which I write, many degrees more important than its satellite outlets; and its spacious houses, with their wide entrances and handsome staircases, were tenanted by persons of wealth and consequence.

Mr. Charles Heneage could not, therefore, suppose, that Eustace was listening to the strains of a professional singer, in one of these select and highly respectable streets; and he expected to see the young senator, after a short delay, knock at the door, and enter the house. But no,—the voice ceased, and Mr. Floyer turned away, proceeding on his walk. Just at this moment Charles, as he was ordered, assailed him with his aunt's message, and at the same time the worthy old lady's ponderous coach, with its two footmen with cocked hats, drew up to the pavement.

“Be sure you tell Mr. Floyer right, Great Ormond Street, number two,” cried old Mrs. Heneage, putting her head far out of the window, the light of one solitary lamp irradiating her hair, which was powdered and clubbed, and which looked something like a small bag of flour on the summit of her forehead. “But I

am sorry to see a gentleman
walking," added the
down upon the pavement
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maid's husband —"

"Now, do not p-
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alarmed and nervous in a carriage, though she drove out every day.

Strength of mind was not a part of education in our grandmothers' days; it was rather the mark of a fine lady to be as troublesome a coward as ever marred a party of pleasure, or provoked a husband into the sin of breaking a commandment.

"Now we are in Queen Square!" exclaimed the old lady, after asking every one the whole way whether the coach did not lean to the right or to the left, whether they were quite sure a wheel was not coming off, or if it was not possible that her horses, which had led an even and virtuous course for some dozen years, might not take fright that one night, and for that one particular occasion: "Now we are in Queen Square, I conceit I am at home. Ellen, love, don't ask me to go out at nights again."

The sure-footed long-tailed animals, trotted through Queen Square as she spoke. The statue of Queen Anne, amid smoky shrubs, was wholly invisible in that murk murk night; but a row of melancholy lamps, perchance placed in that region of darkness to light runaway young ladies from the far-famed and ancient boarding-schools to their lovers, showed just enough to chill the hearts of those who

dead of night, would have appeared a thing apocryphal.

For the vagaries of man's fancy, the eccentricities of his royal will and pleasure, let not feeble woman attempt to account. She has only to meet them with reverence, and to submit for her own sake. But in this case, it might be association with former and happier days—very probably;— a child, or, what is worse, a grown-up, and grown-old simpleton, will serve for that matter. “’Tis not,” says the great master of sentiment, “the recollection of certain scenes that we cherish, ’tis because we see ‘them reflected in looks that we love,’ that the charms of nature have an inexpressible power over our hearts.” Or, it might be, that Eustace Floyer like many other unmarried men, isolated in this vast metropolis, prized the social circle which a *family*—that thing of which we so rarely see the interior in London—presented. There might be a charm even in this brief, but easy, entrance into real domestic life. It is what men of uncorrupted hearts, though men of the world, prize in a manner which they scarcely care to confess. Yet was there one, gifted in intellect, high in rank and character, splendid in fortune, who felt, and acknowledged this one great want, this yearn-

ing for what a well afford. "I am accu Dudley was known to dinners, and to give declare, there is not which I could go in, a

A neat, clear fire, structured housemaids n generally on a warm one of Fox's martyrs, lofty, third room, in and muddled whilst papered and bagged successors; undone o tantalized world what

She envied Ellen every word he spoke to her. She envied even her aunt the low kind tones, and gentle phrases, which were addressed with the deep respect which so well becomes a young man to the old and infirm. She admired, with an enthusiasm far beyond its merits, the forbearance with which the great mind received and tolerated the absurdities of that feeble and glimmering intellect, which was too small to know its smallness. The impatient girl, who fled from those long, minute stories, to which Lady Ellen lent a dull but steady ear, wondered at the calm, unwandering attention which he, whose aspiring capacity had grasped at the noblest objects of mental ambition, gave to the particularities of her old aunt Heneage.

There were some long stories going on;—Gertrude did not hear them. She only listened to Mr. Floyer's answers. But it seemed to her that they always came back to the same point. "Mrs. Stanhope Floyer?—who is Mrs. Stanhope Floyer?" thought Gertrude. "Some tiresome relation, contemporary of my aunt's, perhaps. How tired he must be of the subject."

"Make my compliments to her," Mrs. Heneage was concluding, "and be so good

as to say, if agreeable, I will do myself pleasure of paying my respects to her, and

“I seldom, indeed I never see Mrs. hope Floyer now,” replied Eustace, leaning his head down so low that Lady Gertrude could not see his face.

“What! not see her?—and why? family quarrels, I hope. I concealed as when you said it was Wednesday se’er since you had heard of her. I am very concerned indeed, very much concerned must say, something ran in my head of Stanhope Floyer having behaved amiss, way—but my poor head is so bad;—what was it?—Ellen knows.”

Mr. Floyer hastened to assure the old lady that there was nothing the matter, no quarrels, no family dissensions—he coloured deep as he spoke—but his eloquence was not successful in enlightening that partially dark intellect, from which ideas were with difficulty discharged.

“I am extremely concerned;—I am very much concerned indeed! Hey? why, my soul, you gave up Woodcote to them; I am vastly concerned at her turning out ungrateful; it’s remarkably unkind. I will not make nor meddle; but I must say, I t

it a strange world, a very strange world indeed."

There was no contradicting that axiom, and Mr. Floyer, as if he would not combat it, soon rose, apologized for his intrusion, and withdrew. The bed-candles then walked in of their own accord; the two young ladies demurely withdrew; Mrs. Heneage waited till her maid, as old as herself, had hobbled up stairs, to assist her mistress in hobbling up a still higher flight; the old porter barred the doors; and Charles, with an inch of candle, a hint from the old housekeeper that he was not to sit up, went to his chamber.

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business, which were necessary, had been settled by a mutual friend; not even a message of kindness, on either side, had been transmitted; yet Adeline perceived that nothing was omitted that could conduce to her comfort and welfare; she knew that a protecting hand was extended to guard her from annoyance; but this was all. Those delicate proofs of daily remembrance, those attentions to our fancied wants, which speak a thoughtful affection, and which win the heart by a slow pioneering system, had, nevertheless, ceased. Eustace was the relation; no longer even the friend. This was right; it was expected; it had even been enforced; but it left Adeline in solitude, that solitude of the heart which is hourly mocked by seeing others around us blessed, that solitude which is contrasted with recollections of a time when every little wish or action of one who was now left to live upon the past, was made the fond subject of an affectionate interest.

This was one trial; but Adeline had a greater still, and the bitterest of these was self-reproach. It was in vain that she sought to repair the effects of her short-lived anger, and to seek a reconciliation with her husband; he chose to keep his place of abode a secret

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age ; she was grown fat and dressy. Heaven grant to those who seek still to interest their friends, a thin, pale old age ! Woman never wholly loses the power to charm, until her face grows red, and her person portly. Who could have supposed that Lady Tyrawley could ever have pined for months in a prison, or have viewed her husband led forth as a criminal to his doom ? Such are the alterations in our feelings ; like the tides, ever-flowing, ever-changing, not only the appearance but the current and quality of our emotions.

“ Sir Tufton has brought me up to town for a little diversion,” was Millicent’s explanation to Adeline, and the tears stood in her eyes, even whilst she laughed at the surprise of her friend on seeing her. “ I have been the whole day at Mrs. Donaldson’s. ’Tis dreadful to think what colours they have brought in this year ; so unbecoming, and Sir Tufton says, ungenteel.”

“ And your son ? ” asked Adeline, whilst she wept, overpowered by a thousand recollections.

“ Oh ! my love, we have found a tutor for him, at last ; a thorough gentleman, Sir Tufton says. We have had no end of trouble. Dear me ! what a difficult thing it is to be educated ! You, love, know nothing about *that* ; happily,

you have no incumbrances. And how that I do not see Mr. Eustace Floyer — or, rather, how is it that I see him so elsewhere?"

"Where, Millicent?"

Adeline's lips quivered as she pronounced the word.

"Don't you know? Well, I thought would have been in the secret if any one. The indifferent Eustace Floyer is caught last. You know Lady Gertrude Heneage. She is very beautiful, though not the beauty I admire. Sir Tufton says she is too *noncée*, — or, in plain words, her manner a little haughty; but she is excessively admired, and remarkably clever."

"And good and kind? — for neither beauty nor talent will make Eustace happy unless he has a heart that is his own."

"What! tears, Adeline? — and about Eustace?"

"Yes, Millicent, about Eustace; for how can I be indifferent to his happiness? — he who promoted my wishes at the expense of his own; the truest friend, — the kindest relation — the most faithful adviser —"

"And why — since he fulfilled these wishes so well — is it that, according to your

saying just now, you so seldom meet?" asked Millicent, startled by the emotion of her friend. "Is it some transient disagreement? Oh! let me reconcile you: he must, — he does wish to be friends."

Adeline shook her head. "Let us not speak upon that subject."

"Tell me how it is," said Millicent, looking at her flushed face, "that still young, still so beautiful, so good, so attractive, you, my dear Adeline, have never thought of marrying again? What! cannot you forget your early attachment? — the unhappy, the unfortunate, — *I* must and always will think him, the criminal Stanhope Floyer, — the cause of all my misfortunes, — of my boy's disgrace. We will not judge him, though; he is in his grave, along with those whom he injured."

Adeline shuddered as her friend spoke. Events long since hushed, themes long since set at rest, recurred to her recollection. The suspicions thrown out by Millicent revived the memory of those dark hints which had been hazarded when Sir Horace died. They had been scarcely repelled, — never refuted; but the honest heart of Eustace had rejected them; and his indignation, his generous unbelief, had first won the confidence of Adeline.

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friend as she spoke: it was bent low by humiliating reflections: but as Millicent spoke Adeline raised her eyes with such a look of unutterable sorrow that Lady Trawley stood self-convicted of cruelty and thoughtlessness.

“I doubted not, Adeline,” she resumed, in explanation, “but that he was no more—and I had hoped better things,—a happier lot for you,—a well-placed affection. I always thought, Adeline, that Eustace—”

“Oh, name him not!” cried Adeline, bursting into tears: “spare me these inquiries!—spare me these cruel conjectures! I am very unhappy!—but do not tell Eustace that: do not let his generous heart be vexed on my account. Mine is an irremediable sorrow; its only solace would be to see those whom I love happy. I feel how fruitless, how wrong it is,” she added, after a struggle with her own feelings, “to revive the memory of by-gone troubles,—to speculate upon what might have been, more especially when God had decreed that a veil of mystery should involve events which at our last dread account alone may be unrolled. Let us not, my friend, by vague speculations, seek to unravel that which is known only to Him,—only to Him who sets our secret sins before us. Your son—”

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universe, — seemed to have driven out of Lady Tyrawley's head the once poignant sorrow, — the contrast of former scenes, — the early death of one near tie — followed by one almost equally premature, far more horrible, — the long incarceration, — the trial, — the doom ! Could these things be forgotten ? They *were* ; and the pleasures of life, its frivolities, its follies of the worser kind, were enjoyed with a relish apparently as keen as if the dice-box and the card-table had never laid the first foundations of that career which the guilty Lawson pursued.

Sir Tufton was now on the pinnacle of fortune, — Lady Tyrawley's fortune was *so* convenient. He had his hunters and his hounds ; and Mr. Lawson Wentworth was a sort of article above all common value, — porcelain ? — it was an insult to use such a metaphor, — crystal could not come up to the delicacy of that condition which the slightest breath of plebeianism could sully. It was amusing to see the boy assuming the strut of the father-in-law — imbibing his sentiments — the narrowest of the narrow ; borrowing his very tone — parrotizing his notions, which fitted the young creature as ill as the boots or coat of his father-in-law would have done.

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up into what he called proper pride. If there was a thing Sir Tufton disliked more than another, it was a knight. Plain esquires were respectable, but the knights,—presuming wretches!—confounded with baronets by the ignorant,—Sir Tufton grew quite warm when he talked of the knights.

Poor Lady Tyrawley! how her warm heart, her real gentility, her long-established and family claims to respect caused her to revolt from all this! Insensibly it won upon her, but it was never a part of her; such littleness never belonged to her, never fitted her as it did Sir Tufton. She tried all she could to look down upon other people, but was kind and gracious notwithstanding her endeavours.

It was melancholy to see Millicent look up to such a being as Sir Tufton, quote, fear, respect him;—and Lawson, the reprobate, appeared almost to advantage in the comparison. For poor Sir Tufton was for ever getting into hot water; for ever requiring apologies and writing explanations; for ever cutting people, or being affronted that people cut him. His pride, from the indulgence of his haughtiness to that regiment of inferiors that Lady Tyrawley loved to have about her, grew hot as

duodecimo, his uncle, Sir Horace. It was as if a sprite from some fair and far-off region had visited this nether world, when Paulina came to spend the day with Mr. Wentworth. She was so merry, so unconscious of her own or of his importance. She called him Edward; wondered why he had dropped the name "Lawson,"—talked freely of Lords—to whom the little creature was too much accustomed to think them anything more than human beings; clapped Mr. Wentworth on the back, and pulled his hair,—in short, the indignities she offered him were quite delightful to witness.

Sir Tufton, who thought that young ladies should be seen, not heard, and should never be detected out of the fifth position, would have been dreadfully scandalized at these proceedings had not Paulina been an heiress, and her mother an earl's daughter. *Those* were the considerations which, like peppermint-water and other stimulants, are useful in disguising unpleasant potions. And little Paulina was very chatty: she had an aristocratic propensity to gossip, and Lady Tyrawley found her extremely entertaining.

"Paulina tells me," she said one day to Adeline, "that our friend Eustace Floyer was in

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Hippisley's reply. "All young girls cannot, —there's my poor Annabella—Eustace would have given his right hand to have had her, but Annabella could *not* like him. I never restrain the inclinations of my girls. Helen's remarkably well married,—her own choice,—so, though certainly we both should have liked such a match for Annabella—and Sir Francis is remarkably fond of his ward—we said nothing to Annabella to persuade her,—not a word."

Lady Tyrawley, polite by nature as she was, bowed and said nothing, but inwardly thought: "This is just to throw dust in my eyes, as the vulgar say," but she good-naturedly remarked "I am sure I am surprised Miss Annabella is not married; she is remarkably handsome, and, as Sir Tufton says, she looks so completely what she is."

Satisfied, or at least appearing to be satisfied with this compliment, Lady Hippisley, in return, lavished a number of well-set encomiums on Mr. Wentworth,—such a charming boy! too good for a commoner. His hands showed "blood," his foot was the foot of one well born; no one could mistake him for what he was not. It was an infinite satisfaction to the well-wishers of the aristocracy to see that nature had set her mark upon them.

Lady Tyrawley curtsied, but coloured. She thought that Lady Hippisley must fancy that Mr. Wentworth was Sir Tufton's son. Not the genealogy of the ill-fated Lawson never transpired until he rendered himself memorable by his evil deeds; then, a curious public had sought out his pedigree. It did not require the Herald's College to ascertain this. Lawson's father had been an actor, and had transmitted some of his histrionic talents to his son, for Lawson was an inimitable actor. Of him may be said what the sarcastic Talland remarked of his *friend* Mirabeau, "*Je dramatisé sa mort*,"—a French friendship, still more French death-bed.

Lady Tyrawley recollected that it had been a main addition to her second husband's sorrow for the delinquency of the first, that all that had transpired; a little polite crime, and nothing compared to the degradation of such a low extraction. It was necessary to place the young heir over with a double coating of pride and exclusiveness in consequence. That related to the vocation of the master of the ceremonies was, therefore, objectionable. Dancing was then a science; not a series of impertinent airs, and of lackadaisical attitudes.

It was necessary to bend, rise, spring, point the toe, face about, to study the *menuet de la tour* before a looking glass, and to serve an apprenticeship to Parisot's horn-pipe. A dancing-master was no common character. He went from house to house in a little gig, with his pumps, and fiddle, and dress-suit packed up, and apparel for a day or two's residence. There were often partnerships in Terpsichore's vocation: one took the slow measure; generally a gouty old Frenchman, with a pinch of snuff between his fingers as he took hold of your hand; a second, was for *gavottes* and *chants Russes*; a third taught the Scotch jigs, and Irish steps. Then, on field-days, the whole firm joined forces; there was a grand review of insteps and elbows; the partners, if they were Frenchmen, especially, were infinitely jealous of each other; and quarrels sometimes broke out just as a *gavotte à la Vestris*, or a *cotillon*, or a *pas-de-deux* was beginning to delight the spectators. What power and privileges were given to these knights of the fiddlestick! What taps they could give on one's arm; what liberties they used to take with one's chin, and with those unruly members, one's shoulders!

Sir Tufton had been for some years deliber-

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therefore, the compliments of Lady Hippisley, reiterated as they were, in that dubious tone which may convey sarcasm, as well as praise, with somewhat of an ill grace, although the time and place were such as to authorise those conventionalisms, which never were so systematically practised as in the days of our grandmothers.

CHAPTER XV.

You have here a goodly dwelling, and a rich.

Falstaff.

MRS. HENEAGE had of late taken to the custom of giving weekly card-parties, routs they were then called, although why, there is some difficulty in saying; for there was little confusion in the formal, methodical, melancholy

lose besides one's time, three florins; this lasts till ten o'clock; at which time I come home, reflecting with satisfaction on the innocent amusements of a well-spent day, that leave no sting behind them, and to go to bed at eleven, with the testimony of a good conscience."*

Such ought to be, no doubt, our consolation when such unalterable old ladies as good Mrs. Heneage immolate the gaiety of the young before the altar which etiquette has dedicated to dulness. Serenity of mind, and an unexcited frame succeed these tranquil assemblies.

Let us drop into the scene at once. Four card tables, fully equipped and manned like a king's frigate, present themselves to view: Mrs. Heneage, with Lady Ellen on one side of her, to take up her tricks. The good old lady had played for thirty years nightly with a certain old rector, Dr. Dunmore, whom the ill-natured world had coupled to his partner. There were the same jocose observations on sitting down, the same anecdotes, just long enough; the same little counters brought out, the same—or one so like its predecessor—little silver

* See Lady Suffolk's Letters.

and purse, made by some cousin of
her's, of whom Mrs. Henrage was a
jealous; the same smile, and the same
nearly,—for a run at cards goes thro'
—that had gone on for forty years.

Lady Gertrude had formerly expressed
detestation of these parties of quad
casino, of Dr. Drumore, and of eve
that Mrs. Henrage, on looking round
course of the evening, was never surpr
find that she had flown up stairs to
nosed, or had even gone to bed. It so
put the old lady a little out of her way
Gertrude fitting about the room, fixing
guys which had strayed out of the perp
lar, in the dark blue Sevres china flower
which were stuck here and there. Mrs. H
had forgotten that Sir Tufton and Lad
rawley were coming; she could not think
Gertrude was so busy about; and Ge
was very restless.

Her young heart, how it throbbed at
knock,—how her quick ear listened to
wheels of every carriage! How well she
his step in the hall, his quick ascent up
stairs! Was that it? No. It was the
derous Mr. Doswell, her aunt's apothec
who had taken such good care of Mrs. E
age for some thirty years. He soon cut

a quadrille party, and was disposed of. That knock! surely. No! It was Lady Hippisley, come with a woeful tale about Annabella's toothache, and Sir William's being gone to the House, though Annabella was safe and merry at a concert, and Sir William asleep in bed. "They were so dreadfully, so particularly sorry!" Mrs. Heneage could not quite understand it, but begged Lady Hippisley to excuse her, and to make herself at home.—That third appeal to the heart and ear! Now, undoubtedly, Gertrude forgot there were the Tyrawleys to come. Slow and stately Sir Tufton lead his wife in. Touched the tips of Lady Gertrude's extended hand,—she could have pinched him in her vexation. With this there was a long, long silence on the stairs; a long cessation of knocks and rings; a calm among the domestics. The old butler had time to stir the fire.—How Gertrude hated that man! his calmness was wormwood to her; and the final shutting of the drawing-room door seemed to her ear like the knell of hope.

Lady Gertrude was too conscious to inquire after Mr. Floyer,—she suffered agonies of expectation: and lo! just as Frontiniac was handed round in little glasses upon a silver waiter, and as the cakes, counted out by the

careful old housekeeper, followed in legitimate succession, Mrs. Heneage, half dozing, turned round, and said,

"I expected that Mr. Floyer would be here to-night; I thought—I conceived—no, I thought of Sir Tufton Tyrawley,—how much you favour Mr. Floyer, Sir Tufton—remarkably alike—a strikingly strong resemblance."

"Aunt Heneage!" cried Lady Gertrude, but she checked herself, whilst the accustomed phrase, "People see likenesses so differently," burst from Lady Tyrawley.

"There is an alliance,—there is a connexion," said Sir Tufton; "that is, the Tyrawleys and the Floyers did intermarry with the Tuftons of Tufton Hall. My great-grandmother was your great-aunt. We are the elder branch of the Tuftons of Tyrawley. Do you understand?"

"Not in the remotest degree," replied Lady Gertrude, looking at him with the utmost contempt. "Mr. Floyer has other grounds to rest his honours on. He will give up the elder branch," she would have said, but courtesy, in which she had been instructed, checked that sharp and unseemly reply.

Still, no knock, no ring, no bustle with the old porter; no footsteps up the stairs—despite all, at last broke through prudence.

"He will not come to-night!" sighed G

trude, as coal was, for the last time, put on the fire—the signal that ten o'clock had struck. The Tokay went round for the last time; Mrs. Heneage announced one pool more: Dr. Dunmore brought in his ten o'clock anecdote; the money-changers were heard ringing their gains upon the table.

“He! who?” asked Lady Tyrawley. “I quite forgot. Eustace came in great agitation about five o'clock to us; he didn't stay a minute—he didn't tell me to make an excuse, so it quite slipped my memory. It was only a message, in case he should go out of town, about Mrs. Stanhope Floyer's affairs.”

“She is gone too,” said Sir Tufton.

“Yes; but I mean, in case she came back through London,” whispered Lady Tyrawley to her husband. “Don't speak loud.”

Lady Gertrude was all curiosity—“Is Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, his aunt or cousin, or what relation?” she asked timidly. “Is she very old? for, from being my aunt Heneage's friend—”

“Old! oh dear no—my dear Lady Gertrude, unless you consider eight or nine and twenty old, which young ladies are apt to do. She was the beautiful Miss Meadows of Northington, but married unfortunately—and—and—we never speak of Mr. Stanhope Floyer.”

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of eighteen has much to do with the affections, which are so tenacious and so sensitive in after-life. The enamoured feelings of girlhood, to a man much older, resemble the worship which a votary pays to some superior being. It is the imagination rather than the heart that is engaged. Lady Gertrude could not call to mind a look, a word that spoke anything more than kindness, friendship—sometimes admiration; for it was impossible not to admire so beautiful and intellectual a being as Lady Gertrude. She had not one stay to rest upon, that could render any return of her own feelings secure. She had been so much admired, so constantly flattered, that this uncertainty was not displeasing. “He is the only person that has never paid me a compliment,” she said one day to Lady Ellen, who could by no means understand how that advanced Lady Gertrude’s estimation of Mr. Floyer.

But to-night, the almost rapturous reception—the bright, fixed glance, the absorbed attention, usually manifested by Lady Gertrude, were exchanged for a listless, dejected, shy, appealing manner, that certainly, in spite of those fixed, unalterable prepossessions which had hitherto produced indifference to all women, interested Eustace extremely. He

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rather think she has delayed her journey for a day or two. Mr. Floyer, did you see her?"

"No, I did not."

The reply was followed by silence.

"I am very sorry that you and Adeline are not on good terms now," resumed the kind-hearted Millicent; "I should have thought it would have been a comfort to both to have been friendly. I could not get her to explain why—tell me how it is? Can I not act the part of a mediator? Can I not bring you together again?"

"You are very good:" Eustace turned to Lady Tyrawley as she spoke: "but we are best asunder, I think," he added, looking down. "It is the kindest thing that friends can do to let it—to let it be so—we have not quarreled."

"You surprise me; for, when I spoke to Adeline, and reminded her of your early and late acts of kindness—of your mother, of all I know, and that we all know of your generous conduct, she burst into tears, and entreated me to speak on the subject no more. Poor Adeline!"

Mr. Floyer made no reply; and when Lady Tyrawley looked round afterwards, to bid him good-night, he was leaning over Lady Gertrude's chair, in earnest conversation.

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wonders of the deep—had warned the inhabitants, even of distant dwellers on the Undercliff, that a storm menaced the Isle of Wight.

Two young men, the only human objects visible, sat on a projecting rock beneath the broken precipice of the landslip, and just where those dark knolls of stone, green with the perpetual coating of the clammy sea-weed, stood like so many islands, whilst the rippling waves lashed around and above them. The wind was fresh, but it was balmy,—balmy even to the decaying frame and heated brow of him who, to look upon the ocean, perhaps, for the last time, had walked thus far, but who might with difficulty retrace his steps up that shelf of slippery pebbles, of which the sloping side of the Cove is composed.

“It is late; the dews are falling—see, my hat, ’tis quite damp,” said the voice of Martin, who was persuading the invalid, whose feet the hurrying waves nearly touched, to return home.

“Your hat! *Your* hat!” replied the friend, whom poor Martin was vainly trying to coax into compliance. “Your hat—why it has no nap on it, to show whether it is wet or dry.”

They sat a little longer. The crescent of the young moon was now seen distinctly in the dark blue sky, and its gleams began to tinge

low over the islets.

"The moon is out—there will be no hope. Flyer, raising that heavenly plane upward, whose night and often, soiled by moonlight—the night."

"Back!—Shane autes after Martin tend in silence to rough voice bids the war, and ply his de of shore.

"Yet the moon : Flyer. "Well, M walk home. I can I first came here—breasts were to stren ding in this place th
M..."

is the interest inspired by that one fatal, comprehensive malady that we call consumption, that the unwearied eye of friendship sees no sameness in its ever-recurring symptoms; and, whilst convinced that there is no hope, watches and hopes still.

The invalid walked with great difficulty towards the ascent which led to his temporary home, stopping often to say, but without impatience, "Oh, for a little more breath!" His very nature, the once impetuous nature of Stanhope Floyer, was now changed; he had borne his feebleness, his occasional sufferings, the restlessness of the consumptive, that craving for perfect ease—a craving which is never satisfied save in the arms of death; he had borne all these with a gentleness that more fondly attached to him, the true-hearted, self-constituted nurse, on whom he solely depended; for the once wealthy, courted man of fashion had no friend save this, the companion of his boyhood,—the victim often, in prosperous days, of his caprice.

There were no invalids in Ventnor in those days;—few inhabitants of any kind. A simple, scattered population dwelt in small huts, perched here and there, some in a nook down between the cleft rocks, some on high pinnacles, some

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by cruel eastern gales ;—shelter for the fragile and fair plants, that affection cannot part with to distant shores—home of the consumptive ! wild Ventnor !— beautiful Bonchurch !— region designed by Providence to receive the young, the lovely, the beloved ! within your sea-girt vale now lie many mouldering forms, which your wooded cliffs protected from the northern blasts — to them death. Yet still your scenes are scenes of cheerfulness— still gazes the mourner out from the casement window, where he sits by the emaciated form he cannot save, and feels that when he looks abroad upon such scenes as yours he must bless that Creative power which has framed so peaceful, so heavenly a retreat,—which gives the solace of such beauties to the soul—so exquisite a death-bed scene to the departing !

Often had poor Martin blessed the hills, the blue waves, the self-sown fantastic forest-trees, which, as he sometimes took a short and solitary walk, drew him from the recollection of that to which he must return—the hot fever of the weak, whose sinking frame looked as if it could bear no more,—the restlessness of the powerless,—the long nights, the unappeasable disturbing cough, borne patiently— so patiently ; for, as the body decayed, God

raised the immortal soul. And Martin rejoiced that he, he had chosen the spot he knew, save the old tenants of the University, the merits of the place. Science had not the sick repair to it,—Ventnor stood in its site of wild beauty. A few scattered huts, an ancient church that had withstood many a storm and many a wreck, called it Bonchurch; but Martin had, when a student, long dwelt in the place: his even his stout frame had been shaken by the dissipations of Oxford. Thither he brought his friend.

The invalid at last gained the height, it was a sad struggle that walk, and his strength ran down with the cold dews of a deathly perspiration as he sat, again to recruit, he proceeded to the Inn. Who would have recognised in that glassy eye, clear, but for the once sparkling glance—the eye that had attracted all gaze by its varied expression and rivalled brilliancy?—who could trace in the sharpened features the countenance of Stanley Floyer? He seemed to know the change in himself; but, to the consumptive, there is always a future,—not that unseen and unimaginable prospect upon which the eye of human frailty strives to rest; not that heavenly Communi-

that rapturous reunion with those who have gone before, the foretaste of which is permitted to the weary who pass through the valley of the shadow of death;—such anticipations are, indeed, theirs; but the consumptive—they whose fugitive strength day by day admonishes that their abiding-place is not here, comprehend not the warning; they look to another spring, another summer—sunny days, cloudless skies, renovated vigour, a return to society.

There are moments to all these fated ones; there were to Stanhope Floyer, moments when a glimmering of the truth—that awful truth that bids the soul prepare, could not be rejected from the mind. Martin had never ventured to confirm these slight, and scarcely expressed surmises. He had been afraid—kind, but short-sighted reasoner!—of “doing his friend harm;” yet he longed to hear Stanhope’s sentiments upon a point of such momentous interest,—the state of his feelings on the subject of “death, judgment, and the world to come.”

Perhaps in the silence of the night, when Martin slept on the sofa in his room—when to watch the moon sailing in lonely splendour through the azure, or to catch the gleam of

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not sleep. Don't say you heard me, Martin, for you did not; *you* were sound asleep. I went to the window, and, would you believe it, I mistook that bush of hydrangea, those pale pink flowers, for a female figure;—I suppose I was feverish;—I even fancied that it moved."

"An omen that we shall have a visit from some lady," replied Martin. "Whom do you wish to see?"

"Oh! you know, Martin, until I am a little stronger, I am not in a state to see fair ladies;—these sleeves—a world too wide; this waist-coat—what could that fellow at Portsmouth mean by making them so large?"

Martin turned away;—a tear stood in his eye, as he pushed back the obtrusive flowers, which prevented the window from closing at once. "Would to God I could tell him!" he whispered to himself.

"How long have you and I known each other, Martin?" asked the invalid, after a pause.

"How long?—how long? Why do you ask me that just now?" returned Martin, his voice choked by an effort to repress his feelings;—alas! to how many such efforts are the relations of those who sink thus slowly, inured! "Fifteen years, last Michaelmas, I dare say. I was on the third form at Eton when you came."

"True! and if I live till next Michaelmas it will be sixteen years."

"Very true. (Now why cannot I—I—why cannot I take this opportunity?")

Martin walked about the room, looking out of one window then out of another, where but near his friend, the sight of his face, that moment, would have upset him and sent him off fairly shedding tears:—
Martin!

"Sixteen years! 'Tis a long time;—never to quarrel either; and there isn't a man in the world that would have done you have done, Martin. But we shall have a merry winter of it;—London for ever!—I shall be better in London than anywhere."

"There is no help for it," thought Martin; "he must find it out. I cannot be the one to tell him—I cannot." So the poor man calmed over his conscience, and drove off at an evil hour by going to see if the prawns had boiled for supper.

When he came back the invalid was sitting on the sofa; his hands were lifted up, folded, as if in prayer,—the sinner had been turned to God! Yet, when Martin entered, the weakness of the sinner was betrayed. He tried to laugh, and to con-

that secret tribute which the chastising Parent heard.

They talked of subjects so foreign to that which occupied both hearts, that Martin grew merry over the simple supper, and in the retrospect of past days, the present, with all its sadness, was forgotten. A young girl, the daughter of the innkeeper, cleared away the remains of the repast, and Martin began to light the bed-candles. He was thus busied, when a hoarse voice muttered,

“Open—open the window!—I am faint!—I cannot breathe!—I—”

“God in heaven!” exclaimed Martin. “He is dying, and I have not warned him.”

He flew to his friend. One of those death-like, inward sinkings, not merely the failure of strength, but the extinction of organic energy, weighed the sick man down, down almost to the very door of death. His piteous look, his gasping, the heaving of that sunk chest betokened extreme danger. Martin hung over him in despair; the innkeeper's daughter, who had not quitted the room, administered some cordial. The soft nocturnal breeze seemed to supply the sufferer with breath; his eye, which was fixed, and over which the eyelid half-closed, became again bright; his colourless lips were tinged;—he revived.

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hope,” he added,

“—Not *much* hope? Then they give *some*: and what’s the use of crying about it, as if I was fairly booked for another world. I may get well; my constitution is particularly strong, and I never had a cough in my life, before this.”

“That’s the worst of it,” said Martin, “and it’s of no use disguising it, Stanhope; it would be wrong in me, it would be criminal;—we have both lived such idle, thoughtless lives, my dear fellow,—we both have. I hope to profit by what I have seen, as long as I live. I am sure it has been a lesson to me.”

“The first lesson I ever afforded to any one in my life, I believe,” said Stanhope, with a smile, such as of old used to follow some sally of wit. “I shall be like that man whose friend wrote of him, ‘nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it.’”

He grasped the hand of Martin as he spoke. There was a silence of some moments; then the eyes of the invalid were again turned upon his friend. “I don’t know how I shall face death, Martin; I have never thought about it. When—how—how long?”

“God only knows, Stanhope; but—” the Curate paused,—“if you have any feuds to reconcile,—or worldly affairs to arrange,—it will be as well—Stanhope—it will be as well—”

"I understand," said the invalid. His look as he spoke, and, with the fee of a child, he wept as a child. It was his to comfort him, and Martin stood by immediate. Cardiac, opium, going to was recommended, and enforced by the lawyer's wife, and by Lucy. It was a not difficult matter that removal, the removal from the sofa below, to the bed above. At last it was accomplished, and quiet breathing of the invalid was alone in the quiet apartment.

Martin had drawn the white curtain again;—he had placed the night lamp convenient place;—he had set all the cases and medicines near at hand; and was going to lie down, when Stanhope called "Send for Abeline!" were the few words which he spoke.

CHAPTER XVII.

Learn, therefore, like a wise man, the true estimate of things. Desire not more of the world than is necessary to accommodate you in passing through it.—ADDISON.

A COACH, with four ponderous horses, stood at the door of a house in Clarges Street. Large nosegays decorated the bulky coachman, and the postilion, who rode on the foremost horse. The footmen were, to use their own words, "uncommon fine." In every corner of the carriage were the heraldic honours of two families united, emblazoned,—the Wentworth and Tyrawley. There was a little mob of green-grocers' boys, girls from the dirty little courts, carrying home linen, orange-women and buttermen, and all to witness the event. Sir Tufton Tyrawley was going to court.

Presently he came out. All people, as he observed, could not go to court. Indeed, in those days comparatively very few people could enjoy that distinction. Old Queen Charlotte had buckramized the drawing-room, which

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only into fashionable life, but into the commercial and professional circles of metropolitan society. There were many ill-conducted women, and they were shamed, and kept out of the way of spreading that contamination which prevails in the present times;—that mad and universal love of admiration, which bursts forth from its hiding-place when a woman becomes a mother and a wife.

We have forgotten Sir Tufton. Behold him strutting forth, in a claret-coloured velvet court suit, with his bag, and coat collar well-powdered. His buttons were diamonds; his knee-bands were studded with jewels; and the little man tumbled into the great coach like a costly bauble into a large casket.

He drove away, and Millicent was left to her own reflections. She might have gone to court; she *just* might. It was doubtful whether the queen would be extremely happy to see the widow of Lawson; but there was nothing against *her*; she had, however, resolved to remain at home, feeling, perhaps, how unsuitable past events would seem, in connexion with present finery.

Her countenance was pensive, as she turned round to address a visiter. “What! Mr. Floyer! and are you not gone to the drawing-

man: Lady Gertrude is to be presented to-night to have seen her presentation."

"And why?" asked Eustace, color slightly, as he spoke.

"Ah! Mr. Flayer, that blush betrays you. Well, I wish you joy; you will be very happy. She is rich, beautiful, clever."

"The riches would rather deter me from being a suitor;—to beauty I have no objection;—the cleverness I can well dispense with, as it amounts to a defect in Lady Gertrude."

"How?" cried Millicent. "She is a fine lady;—she is not a learned lady like one of Mrs. Montagu's, or Mrs. Carter; I neither I should be afraid of those."

"No; but she is witty, and I do not like wit in a woman."

"You are afraid of it, perhaps?"

"Perhaps, I am. Certainly I should be afraid of Lady Gertrude's wit, if it happened to be the direction of sarcasm;—but I should be afraid on other grounds. Wit always implies a certain degree of courage, an inclination to display;—and when a woman is once led up to a voluntary display of superiority, at least such is the general taste, the charm of beauty, all the attractions of youth. In a woman past middle age, it is a degree of fascination in the s

caustic observations which have experience of the world and knowledge of society to support them. Old ladies can be witty, and even sharp, without any want of grace."

"You are very fastidious, Mr. Floyer. Where have you found a woman to come up to your ideas? Mrs. Stanhope Floyer, our dear Adeline, would not. She is too clever for you."

Eustace looked down, as he replied, "Her cleverness never startles;—her tone of conversation has never a discordant note. That quickness of apprehension which the general cultivation of the mind gives, makes her a delightful companion, a most delightful companion."

"You sigh as you speak of her," cried Lady Tyrawley; an old curiosity suddenly revived in her mind.

"I have never known her equal," said Eustace, with much emotion. "She is formed to be beloved. But I was not intending to speak of her. Perhaps I was regretting that women are so seldom companionable beings; I don't understand why. They are taught languages; they are taught music; dancing—drawing; but they are never trained to converse. Now, conversation is like the air we breathe,—a daily, an hourly want. It im-

power the night, it shows the dejected, or some retirement delightful;—it is of more importance than the art of letter-writing.

"Will then, Lady Gertrude has it in her power, Mr. Fayer?"

"No, it is perfection. She chooses her words and expressions. Conversation is an effort here;—to please it should flow easily. Besides, she never loses;—she never should always triumph; and great men, and highly-learned friends, that I have seen, give the same exact attention to the person to whom they are speaking."

"You give them one model," exclaims Lady Tyrrelly; "I see nothing in all. No do tell me why you have quarrelled; why you do not meet; why those who have so much to say for each other should be alienated."

"Ask her," replied Estover; "ask Adeline if she has not estranged myself; I am ready and her ability, what she permits me."

"Why, how do you do?" said Lady Tyrrelly. "Do not run away, Mr. Fayer." And, at the bidding, Estover stood spell-bound, as it were in the middle of the room.

Adeline came in. She was calm, for she was unconscious of the scene which was passing at Ventnor. Mr. Martin's despatch had been delayed; Stanhope had revived again.

She was, as yet, wholly unacquainted with his illness.

At the sight of Eustace she started. They had not met since they had parted at Woodcote. A tacit agreement that they were not to meet, was all that had separated them; but they *were* separated; and with what conflicting feelings those who have once been very intimate,—who have once exchanged every thought,—do meet after absence and estrangement, may be easily conceived.

Adeline was altered. She had suffered much; and the attention of Eustace was riveted by the change, a change which had left little of that bloom which had once given such a charm to her countenance. But in his eyes, in the eyes of a friend devotedly attached, of one who *had* loved her;—and that love, though combated, though subdued, never wholly dies,—the alteration did but enhance the tenderness of that affection which is all sympathy. Such was the nature of the attachment which Eustace had, during so many hopeless years, retained; and such is the attachment which a strong and generous mind feels for woman.

The moralist could not, in such a case, condemn it. Eustace Floyer had loved Adeline before her marriage with the romantic enthusiasm of a boy; he had loved her before

believe of her engagement. He had so much to see her happy. When she met his good sense, his humour, his religion, and his piety, that there was but one way to be pursued consistent with that which he most loved, integrity. He avoided every of his crosses, and strove by an assiduous and quiet career to subdue the softer passions of his youth. He succeeded: the better part of love still remained:—its disinterested regard, its solicitude for the happiness of the woman whom he had first loved. He was often distressed when he saw her neglected, unappreciated,—men who have a great deal to do with us, not to happiness, and who are often the misery of hearing, indefinitely, and sometimes witnessing the disappointment of a woman whom they would fain see made happy,—can feelingly understand. It was not only that Adeline had married to an uncongenial suitor;—it was that unaccountable of mind and habits which it oftentimes wings the heart to witness, when she doubted the countenance of Eustace, and he thought of her as she once was,—idolized in health, gay in spirits; his fate was to see her warm affections slighted,—spirit broken by neglect, or fretted by jealo-

—to see her reduced from her rightful position in the world by contaminating society. Alas! he knew but in part what she had suffered!

She was again, as the world believed, free. Stanhope, so the tidings were brought, was dead. Thrown into each other's society, singularly formed to render each other happy, young, disengaged and disencumbered, the early feelings of Eustace had been more than revived;—they were strengthened and elevated by the general elevation of his character:—what had been romance, was now a delicate and discriminative preference;—what had been affection, was now an ardent, and enduring, and unextinguishable attachment. No; the first impulses of the youth's passion may be conquered;—the matured, the more ardent love of a man who respects, as well as loves, is never wholly to be subdued.

They had loved innocently—when Stanhope Floyer's existence became known, they parted virtuously: further, our annals say not. What pining regrets, what doubts and jealousies may have disturbed that interval between the parting and the meeting, conscience alone could tell.

Adeline was the first to say, "This is an unexpected meeting—but to me it cannot but be agreeable."

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She walked towards the window to read it. The word "Express" was marked on the outside: the direction was scrawled in an unknown hand, and was, from the extreme haste in which it was written, nearly illegible. But the quarter from which it came, the news which it contained were not conjectured, not suspected. It contained but few words; but those words were of sad and solemn import, and closed with an appeal to the feelings of an absent wife, a remonstrance in behalf of the dying husband.

The blow was too much for her. "I did not know that he was ill!" words, uttered with a burst of anguish, were followed by a tremour, a faintness—she sank upon a seat. Lady Tyrawley flew for assistance, and Adeline was left alone with Eustace, kneeling before her.

She could not understand, distinctly, what was happening—but she afterwards recalled passionate expressions,—the phrases of former days,—words to which both, isolated as they were from other ties, had long been strangers. She heard them, and had not strength to check them, and was glad that she and Eustace were alone.

But they were not alone;—a third party was in the room;—a gay, bright being, to whom the trial of disappointment was new, and who

read in those words her destiny. Y creature ! beautiful, but immature ! to the youthful heart that disappoints ; it is, when the spring of life when we have ventured our "all, in bark, — and it is wrecked," that affection embitters the remainder of Youth is made up of hope. Go, and wisely.

The drawing-room was over; — the tation had taken place: — but of what it that all eyes were fixed upon the Gertrude ; that every lip spoke of her for whom the gay dress was selected so much care, with such an attention taste, — he was absent ! and Gertrude, regardless of all admonitions from Mrs. Heneag of all remonstrances from Charles, had round that way to inquire from Lady rawley the cause, and had entered the drawing-room at this critical moment.

This, then, was Mrs. Stanhope Floye plain, uninteresting relation of Lady Gertrude's imagination ; the being whose was never uttered but in that low, hesitating tone, which Lady Gertrude so well remembered. Adeline was seated on a sofa ; — her head was thrown back, — tears glistened on her pale cheek. Yet oh ! how beautiful ! how

symmetry of that face spoke at once to the mind's eye—this is beauty! And those fair, powerless hands, by whom were they held? by whom were words of tenderness addressed, such as even the unexperienced could not misunderstand? they were the accents of affection.

There was something in the scene before her, sacred, and mournful;—something that stilled the faculties of Gertrude, and made her loath to withdraw. But Adeline spoke! She uttered the word “Eustace!” It was spoken in passion, of grief or rebuke; and Gertrude, with the instinctive delicacy of a high mind, fled. When Adeline spoke again, she and Eustace were alone.

“—Eustace, he is dying! I am chastised of God!” She looked around her. “Where—where is the letter? Oh! Eustace, when I should have been near him, he has been indebted to others for that—that care, which I refused him!”

She rose as she spoke. “There is no time to be lost, he will be gone—he will be no more ere I can reach him! Have pity on me, dear Eustace! and send for my carriage—for my servants—I must go directly,” she added, in a tone of impatience—“That letter—”

“Can I—may I, Adeline,” said Eustace, as with trembling hands he took the letter—his

eye ran rapidly over the hieroglyphic directions of Mr. Martin — “may I go with you?”

“It will be best,” said Adeline, recovering presence of mind, “that you—you, Elizabeth—should follow me. Oh seek advice for Stanhope! my dear, dear Stanhope! He has had advice—he has not had such advice as he ought to have. Bring the most eminent physicians—travel all day, all night! lose not an instant, and go!”

“I will—indeed I will. Be comforted.”

“Comforted! What can comfort me? I spurned him from me,—that I have left my duties of a wife to others; because, by my own heart was in error!” She threw her hands in her anguish. “Oh, that I were dead! He is gone!—thank God, Eustace is gone!” she exclaimed wildly to Millicent as that moment entered the room.

“He! who? Oh, Mr. Floyer. I should have come sooner, but Lady Gertrude met me and told me you were better, and sent me to my room.”

“Millicent!” exclaimed Adeline, pained and angry, “Stanhope is dying!”

Lady Tyrasley turned to look upon her friend. Had she spoken the truth she would have said what most people say when a

thrifty member of a family dies,—“it is all for the best,”—but she forbore—the bruised reed she saw would bear no more.

She did all that friendship could: she offered to go with Adeline to watch over the death-bed of the unfortunate and long-estranged husband. She forgot that she had been the wife of Lawson; the sister of Sir Horace forgot, in her kind impulse, her cherished suspicions. But Adeline remembered them.

“Let him have none around him now but such as are kindly disposed,” was her reflection. “Besides, besides Millicent,” she said, answering, as it were, her own thoughts, “I shall be happier with him—alone—we shall have much to say; we have to exchange forgiveness;—Oh! my God,—forgive me,—I have a feverish anxiety to set out—I shall not see him!—I shall never see him again!”

“Look,” said Lady Tyrawley, “how prompt Eustace has been; there is a carriage here already—he bade me as he went away have my maid in readiness to attend you, to save time, and—”

We forbear all further explanations. Before Sir Tufton had returned from the drawing-room, faded in his splendour, Adeline had long passed Hyde Park Corner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Death thou hast seen
In his first shape on man ; but many shapes
Of Death, and many are the ways that lead
To his grim cave, all dismal ; yet, to sense
More terrible at the entrance than within.

Mn.

It was Sunday morning. The grocer's in Ventnor was shut up, and the inmates of the house were setting out to chapel, and serious, devout and thriving. The minister was to preach that day, for he was one of twelve elected ministers of the Wesleyan chapel, down near the beach. His wife, his apprentice, a female servant, and a child or two followed his revered footsteps.

The party passed the inn. "The windows are open still," said the wife. "I wonder it lasts so long ; but then, it's such a lingering disease ! So he wouldn't read the discourse

"No : sent 'em all back, and told me to wrap up my tea and sugar in 'em. He's an unconverted sinner."

“ Yet, he’s a very nice gentleman,” said the woman.

They turned round a precipitous lane to the left, and other parties succeeded: sun-burnt labourers,—a tall and well-formed race,—with their blue jackets, round black hats, and wide trowsers; these, chiefly, followed the grocer’s track, and bent their steps to the Methodists’ meeting-house, where plenty of good psalms, short but extatic prayers, and sermons highly seasoned, to tempt the small appetite which the hard-working and way-faring man has for reflection, drew them, not only on the sabbath morning, but again at six o’clock. A few groups of the better class walked nimbly towards the little church of St. Lawrence, wending their pleasant way between hedges, which seem almost as old as the hills;—such clusters of ancient ivy with the knotty stems; such venerable thorns,—such masses of bryony and of clematis,—looking, as if nothing but the perch of some little bird had disturbed their vagrant growth for centuries.

The last of the church-goers had passed the inn, and the transient bustle which there had been, ceased. All was again still—and, save the ocean, the voice of nature was silent: for, towards noon, the matin choristers

that pertinaciously sing even into one's dow, fly to their nests.

Within that chamber, where a piece green baize is rudely pinned up against window to screen the glare of light, lie emaciated form, consumed in strength, w even since the preceding day. Night night Martin had sat up with him, dread lest the last change should take place out his perceiving—at the instant—that hour was come. For so weak and faint the invalid, that it was expected his rebel spirit would pass away without a struggle if he had fallen asleep. Night after night the medical attendant had left the room, prophesied that when he returned the sufferer would be at rest. Often had the good physician been sent for hurriedly, Martin believing the moment, at the last, ardently wished had arrived. For now, the weary one had begun to pray for death,—had begun to count the hours when he should be free—to ask, Will it be to-day? will it be to-morrow? As if the afflicted spirit longed to rejoin its heavenly Parent, and to be received into the bosom of God.

Poor Martin! how he had rejoiced when the dying man had said to him, "Read something to console me!" The words

uttered in agony, but they seemed the first dawnings of an awakened conscience. No; they were not the first! The chastening process had been long, silently and slowly, working in the heart of Stanhope Floyer—inch by inch he had felt his strength decay: he had not been wholly deceived, although the never-dying hope of the consumptive had ever and anon risen up within him. In the darkness of the night, what thoughts, what a review of his past career—what solemn dread may not the sufferer have entertained!

But this morning he was cheerful—he was better; he seemed to forget death; he had even begun to plan for the future—to think that he *must* go to Madeira; it would be the safest, the precautionary plan. The dread apprehensions of weeks were forgotten;—this world, this life were again all in all.

His brow and face had been tenderly bathed by Martin, and the fine locks parted neatly over that noble forehead; and the kind friend, who would not suffer a servant to approach him, had moistened the parched lips and thrown fragrant waters upon the bed, and had set all things in order around the helpless invalid:—his last office was to place a small vase with flowers, which Lucy had brought in, so that the invalid might see and smell them,

and yet not be overpowered with their Wonderful ! the invariable passion for which the consumptive of all dispositions exhibit. Is it that these heavenly objects afford a foretaste of a future and scene? or that they present the last of that nature which we have loved finite state—the sole remembrancers in room of what is joyous, healthful, beautiful.

Martin was jocose, and even merry, called in the assistance of Lucy to do the rest of the room, and said that he then go to make his own toilet, with the care, as it was Sunday. “And, Lucy—” said the Curate, glancing at the fair maiden who was flitting about the chamber “is so gaily adorned to-day !”

Just as the Curate was about to quit the room, the invalid made a request—he wished to have a looking-glass brought to him. It was in vain that Martin tried to parry the wish,—in vain that he begged him to wait till he was a little stronger. Stanhope persisted.

A looking-glass was put into his hands. Scarcely had he glanced at his own resemblance than he let the glass fall upon the floor—he seemed to sicken at the ghastly sight.

a conviction, new to him, even to him who had so long expected his doom, appeared to strike into his heart; yet, in a moment or two, he held up again the fatal mirror before him.

“This is death!” he said slowly, as he gazed upon the spectre face reflected. “Will she know me?”

“Who? — Mrs. Stanhope Floyer — your wife?” replied Martin, hurrying the glass away.

“When will the post be in? — Can she come to-day — to-night?” asked the invalid, whilst cold dews covered his forehead. “I am so afraid she will not be here in time.”

“She will if she sets out directly. Curses on her cold heart!” muttered Martin to himself.

“Hark! I heard wheels! — I heard a carriage!” cried the invalid, raising himself, with a wonderful effort, in bed; “Adeline! — is it Adeline?”

No, it was only the innkeeper’s tax-cart. Martin tried to soothe his friend’s disappointment by offering to read to him.

“No — no — I cannot pray till *she* comes — I must ask her forgiveness — I must go down upon my knees to her. How can I expect God to forgive me if *she* does not? Let Lucy

sit beside me whilst you dress, and make me
 thing comfortable, and ready, and receive
 ceive her," added the sufferer, looking
 fretful eagerness around him, and eyeing
 at Martin's unshaven chin and slipshod
 "— And you go to sleep," said
 walking on tip-toe out of the room.

He was called back in a few minutes.
 "Martin, I didn't speak unkindly to
 just now, did I, Martin?—you're not
 with me, are you, Martin?" And Stanhope
 Floyer—he who once scoffed at all feelings
 wept as he drew his kind nurse's hand
 him, with that almost childish passion
 consumption, which bestows at one moment
 such exaltation of spirit, produces in its
 times.

"— I have no friend but you;—you won't
 leave me, Martin—you won't be angry
 me?"

Martin was now inured, not hardened,
 these afflicting variations; he never now
 tempted to do more than soothe and to support
 the sinking frame until nature should quietly
 give way;—so he brought a cup of warm milk
 to the sufferer, and bade him sleep.

"And do you think she will be here when
 I awake?" asked Stanhope, as he put the cup

to his lips,—and his eye was fixed on that of his friend, as much as to say “*Shall I awaken?*”

“She *may* be here,” said Martin, with an emphasis; “but the boats don’t cross to Ryde on a Sunday,” he added, making use of a small convenient falsehood to tranquillise the invalid, who soon fell asleep.

He slept so long, he looked so deathlike, that Martin made up his mind as he came from time to time in his dressing-gown to look at him, that he would be spared *that* interview.

Meantime, she who was thus expected, travelled day and night to Southampton, a perilous, and, in spite of her endeavours, a slow journey; for sometimes horses were wanting—they were generally ordered beforehand—and it was, therefore, a day and a night before she reached Southampton. The bells were ringing for church when she entered that ancient town; and a well-dressed, apparently happy host of prosperous families were pouring into places of worship. Often had she envied such as now presented themselves before the inn-window, as she stood waiting till the tide served; often had the desolate Adeline wished herself one of a numerous and cheerful family; but now

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blue ocean, of which many a glimpse had been caught. The waves of Sandown Bay appeared in sight; and then the few cottages which then clustered about Shanklin Chine deceived Adeline. She stopped the carriage, and inquired with a quivering lip, "If that was Ventnor."

No—there were some miles still to go; there was sweet Bonchurch to be passed, and its Pulpit Rock, and Octagon hill, and secluded St. Boniface,—fair spot! dwelling fit for a sage or poet; and then, down in yonder nook, backed by wide downs, and on the very verge of impending cliffs, as if tempting Providence, or nestled in the Cove, lay those few cottages and houses which then composed Ventnor.

The carriage drove on; once it stopped, that the way, the exact spot, might be inquired. How harrowing to the panting breast of hope deferred were those minute questions! how the eyes of the spell-bound being who sat within the carriage were turned wildly on every passer-by, as if he could tell her—"Has any one died to-day in Ventnor?" The wheels went on; the fearless horses of the Island dashed down another descent—it is the last! —they stop!

Adeline gazed, mute and fixed, upon one

chamber. She could
where Mr. Stanhope
keeper's wife, who s
her drink some wate
herself to go up stairs.

"He had been
"Asleep!" The wor
start—"Yes, he was
once, and asked if she
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effect; it loosened the
which seemed to bin
Adeline wept as she he
—what a relief!

Meantime Lucy had
an instant; he was so
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she was present to him then ;—memory, decaying memory, had been renewed for once. Her voice, her features were present as if in reality ; her soft hand was placed upon his burning forehead ; her voice, — encouraging his childish plays ;—his toys and his whips, and his youthful sports were brought back to his fancy. The weary pilgrim was in his infancy again.

Then, there was a more confused, a darker picture. Beings thronged together ;—the friend estranged,—the friend wronged,—Neville, Lawson the tempter—the enemy,—the triumphant foe,—the injured Helen. Her face ! why did it succeed that of maternal affection, of virtue, of matronly goodness, of the loving, sainted mother, who had come to summon him,—such was his consciousness,—half sleeping, half waking, to where *she* was ?

He started ! he awoke ! The room was not so light as it had been ; and Stanhope's senses wandered,—only a little :—'twas the period of that dread fever, the fever we call hectic, the fever which leaves no hope on its departure. It was his period of energy, and restlessness, of thirst and feeble irritation. He called to Lucy,—Lucy did not reply,—“Has every one left me ? Lucy,—Martin, are you tired,—quite tired

of me? Have I no one to nurse me? Bear with me a little longer,—I shall thank no one long, — no one long!”

Who hangs over the sick man's pillow, yearning to kiss his brow, and to clasp,—even that wasted form, and to kiss parched lips? Adeline, check those tears! They are for guilt, and woe. The penitent, the doomed hath no need of them!

She knelt by him. In an instant she recognised; tranquil, yet true was the emotion. “I knew you would come! How long have you been here long? Was it you that I saw? No, it was not you—I have been asleep, I know not how long.”

“—I am too weak just now to talk to you. He added a few minutes afterwards; “only forgive me!”

The eyes of the sufferer closed, and his long eyelashes were moistened with tears. Such emotions lasted not long. The fever of the invalid soon returned to their long-tormented channel, his own physical condition. The body asserted its power;—the spirit sometimes soared, the mind triumphed over the agonies of the hour; but flesh and blood taxed severely, and human infirmity prevailed.

Let us hasten over the close of the peni-

brief career. No royal banquet was ever more desired,—no bridal day more longed for,—never hour of victory more anxiously anticipated, than was rest, the rest of the grave, coveted and prayed for by that weary one.

“Do not be too kind to me,” he said to Adeline, “or I shall *wish* to live.” Some few disclosures, some secret conversations, broken by the hollow cough, by the death-like faintings, passed between them. Oh how she watched that sick bed! How she blessed God that she was there! How soothing were those last hours of ministering kindness to *him*,—to her, through life, invaluable. The departure was not easy. Many were the trials which that weak frame had to bear. At last, blindness fell upon the afflicted man, forerunner of the darkness of the grave. Then,—when the shattered frame seemed scarce held together—awful delirium, fearful convulsions shook, as with the blast of a tempest, the twig that could scarce sustain itself. Oh! that last fearful night! When the pent-up thoughts, let loose, revealed all that the conscious, guilty spirit had carefully concealed! When horrors—sudden dread of the terrors of retribution, doubts of the saving word of God, misgivings of eternity, plunged the being, just sensible, not capable

his children."

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appealed to his
deceived him.

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is good? The

"There is!"
we shall meet a

"Then I an
say something,
wish to speak!
line! oh! my
crime;—I did n
—Lawson—Yo

"I hear! I l
replied Martin,

Martin was overpowered. He retreated to the window, far from the bedside; and sat there incapable of speech, or of exertion. It was for Adeline to administer the cordial,—to wipe the dews from the wan face,—to support the aching limbs,—to relieve by incessant change of posture, the restless afflicted being;—to soothe fast-coming fears. Nay, more,—to answer with decision and promptness the wild inquiry,—to support the dying sinner in his agonies,—and to point to that Cross whereby he might be saved.

It was almost a relief when total aberration, fierce cries, screams, that had no origin save in the general chaos of the understanding, succeeded to that partial and torturing consciousness. Whilst the nurse laid low the head,—in compliance with a belief, which prevails among the common people, that in the horizontal position the spirit most easily quits the clay—whilst Adeline still wiped the cold brow, and moistened the lips, her heart rent by those piercing shrieks, but her resolution—woman-like—strong to her duty, a carriage slowly approached the inn. She heard it not; the succour long wished for, the advice vainly solicted, came too late. Eustace, and the physician whom he had brought, alighted.

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Adeline was
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up his hand, as
he sleeps !”

CHAPTER XIX.

“All 's well that ends well.”

WHEN we leave the scene wherein we have been familiar with the image of Death, we think that we can never return to the same cares, the same pursuits, to the hurry, and the interests of life : happily, we are mistaken. Our aim here is to live well, — not, as old Barrow says, “to be always a-dying.” We are not sent into the world to think only of its close.

In time we can recover almost anything, — widows especially : they have evergreen faculties in this respect. Mothers, in their bereavements, have less capacity in that way. In respect to widows and widowers, it seems, sometimes, that when they have once recovered from their first sorrows, there is something pleasant in the idea of beginning life over again, as it were, — in renewing those agreeable courtships which give people so much importance in their

under the chestnut-tree some of them repose, — others beneath the shade of that bullace tree that grows near the copse. See! they are startled, and retreat, silly animals! as if pursued by enemies. A lady and gentleman have risen from the bank where they sat, and, descending the hill, presently they enter the pleasure-ground, and loiter in the dale.

—They entered the cottage through the bow-window. How soft the shadows were on the opposite bank! — how quiet and simple the scene to those who were henceforth to accustom themselves to a large hereditary mansion, ancestral dignities, and a numerous establishment, — very pleasant things, nevertheless!

The cottage drawing-room was just as it was when Lady Theodora died, save that it had her picture, better dressed than she had ever been, and looking happy and pleased, which she rarely did. It is fortunate when a husband and wife have known and esteemed the mother of the former; it is *such* a bond between them: a man always loves his wife the better under such circumstances.

Eustace and Adeline stood gazing at this picture. There was no self-accusation, nothing mournful and bitter in the associations connected with that portrait. Eustace looked

at it until a tear almost moistened his
this his wedding-day.

"We must not tarry here," he said, he hastened Adeline again through the to the green gates, passing under beech which impeded the movements of their tall form. They got into their carriage, down the village, passed the inn, the Grove, the church;—but stopped not at Grange: that they visited when time had med the sadness of early recollections, and confirmed the happiness of their married life.

They are all passed away now, that generation who have figured in my pages, and I may say what I please of them. As I have not kept a diary since 1789, perhaps my intelligence may not be altogether so accurate as might be wished. Some of it has been supplied by others. An old letter from Northampton says:—"Mrs. Jones is again a widow. She has let the Grove, and left Northampton for Mr. Jones has a successor. She declares she is absolutely afraid to remain, for fear she should marry the present head of the academy she wants to get out of the 'profession' altogether. The last time I heard of her she was going about everywhere with a lieutenant of the Marines, a very young man, calling her

jokingly, her younger brother, — but that, I think, is a very suspicious circumstance.”

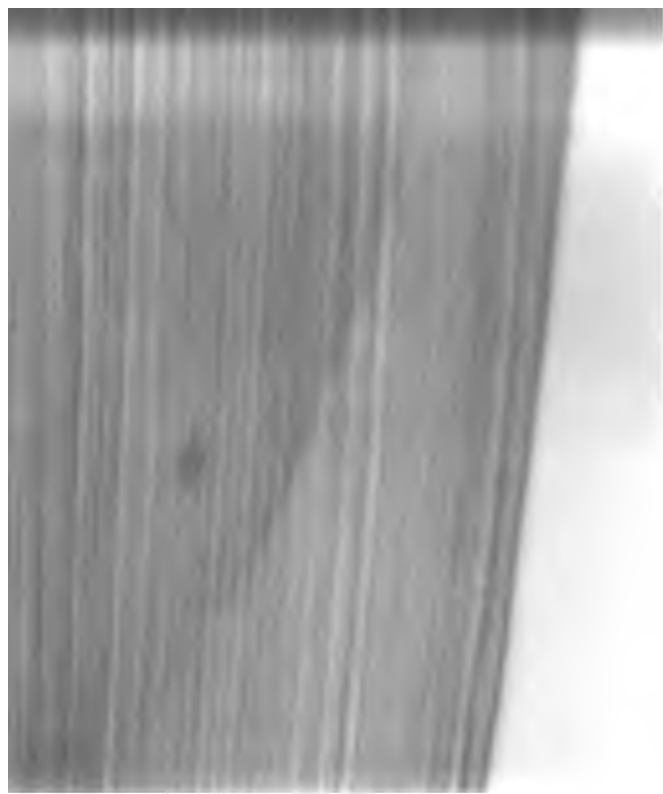
It may readily be inferred that my informant, who wrote thus to me, was an old maid, especially as, in her postscript, (this was when letters cost eleven-pence, — ten-pence, according to the late ministry, more than they were worth,) she says, “Be so kind as to write by opportunities.” But she was not exactly an old maid, but an old maid spoiled, — Mrs. Gadsden, at your service, — Miss Portman in her maiden days. Mr. and Mrs. Gadsden removed, some time during the year 1789, as far as my memory serves me, to Ireton. Mr. Gadsden occupied Mr. Martin’s place there, but not his place in the hearts of the villagers; for the “Gumleys and Martins,” as Mrs. Bernal called them, formed a set who, not contented with being superior in wealth and importance to their poor neighbours, took especial care to let others know that they thought themselves superior. Their principle was, “exclusion and interference,” — exclusion of the middling and humble from the enjoyments (of the dull order it must be owned) at the Rectory; and interference in the enjoyments and concerns of those whom they would not honour by admitting to an equality.

Mr. Gadsden led the life of a pet *marmoset*, or a Love-bird in a cage;—Mrs. Gadsden took such care of the little Curate. To counterbalance the happiness of having every separate ailment made a matter of importance there was this evil,—like most pets, he was a prisoner. No one was less disposed to run risks than Mr. Gadsden; but if, in July, he ventured to open a window, there were Mrs. Gadsden and the four Miss Gumleys running to shut it. Mrs. Gadsden and Mrs. Gumley were women of the large order, Amazons in person, and in voice, manner, and intellect corresponding. They were very sensible women,—that is, they thought no woman sensible except themselves. Poor Mr. Gadsden was evidently the weaker half, and was fairly subjugated by two gigantic commanders, one of whom was enough to frighten a regiment of small men. I doubt whether he was happy, but, at all events, he had the satisfaction of acting under the banners of “My sister Gumley” on all clerical occasions,—in domestic matters, of being guided by his superior wife with an occasional reference to “Mamma.”

Mrs. Heneage went off, at last, one very severe winter, leaving a large portion of her fortune to Lady Ellen, and her house

Great Ormond Street. I fancy the routine of *that* house went on much the same after the death of Mrs. Heneage. Most people thought Lady Ellen would launch out a little, but she did not; nieces who have lived so long with old aunts seldom launch out. The quadrille parties, dull enough to secure Lord Chesterfield's test of a good conscience,—the attendance of Dr. Doswell, and the friendship of the clergyman, went on just the same as if Mrs. Heneage had been in existence. The old porter died in the hall-chair, having closed up the doors at the usual hours the same night. The drawing-rooms remained papered up, and every one said, and said truly, that Lady Ellen was just walking in the steps of her aunt.

I see, by the Peerage, that Lady Gertrude *did* marry, well, as the world said,—that is, to a man of rank. I can fancy her, gay and joyous, at the court of Queen Charlotte, (of decorous memory,)—splendid in all her doings, liberal in her sentiments, warm-hearted, ingenuous,—but unequal. I cannot picture her to myself as the happy wife, regulating her home and family well:—but how can we know what really passes in this world? After all, Lady Gertrude may have been the most domestic and enviable creature in existence; and had



not long survive her mother, Lady Wentworth. Happy for them that they did not witness the extinction of that race on which Lady Wentworth had vainly prided herself. It is a melancholy story, but I must, I suppose, wind up the whole with this sort of obituary.

The youth, Sir Edmund Lawson Wentworth, was brought up not only in ignorance, but in a wholly wrong apprehension of his relative position in society. It was like placing a bouquet of wax flowers in the heat of a summer sun, to send a youth so little constituted to face his fellow-men, into the world. He was handsome, gentlemanly, sensitive, and, having had the benefit of Sir Tufton's notions of education, not *too* clever. He grew up with the notion that, next to the Wentworths, there was no one like the Tyrawleys; the Lawsons, of course, had a reflected splendour. He had a vain habit of bragging and vaunting of his family. Poor Sir Edmund!—it would have been as well to have warned him a little on that point. He went into the army. His mother just lived to see him put on his first suit of regimentals:—one would have thought no one had ever put on regimentals before. It was after her death, I hope and believe, that he went into depôt with

was given by young Le
officer demanded reparations
think," said Sir Edmund
fight you? You are t
— "And you," returned
son of a murderer!—
in bringing to justice."

Young Wentworth
to disbelieve this statement
blow came upon him
his superior wealth, he
had made him enemies
was no great acquisition
ever his degree or his
kept away from the man
was seen strolling about
One morning he was found
child of a mistaken son
disgrace:—the act was
It is an awful fiat that
= fathers upon the child
every Sunday with com

name. The house was partly pulled down, and that portion which remains, makes a tolerably-sized dwelling-house, nothing more, and is let by the present family.

I had nearly forgotten Mr. Martin : he was admirably provided for, you may be sure. He was not an ambitious man, and he married Lucy. I have a great notion that he lived in the Isle of Wight, somewhere near Brading, in a thatched cottage, half-covered with myrtles, and with *such* flower-beds in front ! It is also probable that, as he was a clergyman, and not rich, he had a large family. There is a whole row of tomb-stones, — Sarah Martin, James Martin, Hannah Martin, and sundry others, in a little church where he did duty ; — I will not commit myself by stating what I conjecture to be the name of the village, for fear I should be wrong. He must have been happy, — he must *be* happy, — for what is a future state, as far as we can imagine, but an extended sphere for all the virtues to bloom into perfection ? Truth, love, charity — it is only for resignation that we shall have no need.

The name of Floyer is not extinct : it is an honoured race. Some future Eustace and Adeline may form the subject of some future





